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## **Critical Analysis on 'Dying to Live'**

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RagingFerrets 10 minute investigative piece was entitled 'Dying to Live' and delved into the issue of AIDS patients defaulting from ARV's that have been handed out by the government.

The topic itself was the cause of much debate. The crew really struggled to find a subject for a documentary investigation. Eventually, the issue of 'defaulting' was chosen instead of a piece aimed at tackling poor service delivery by local Estate Agents, particularly in their treatment of students. This was a good choice as the ARV issue is an incredibly important issue, a matter quoted as being "literally a choice between life and death" by one of the interviewees. The story on defaulters was far more serious and important, especially when placed in the context that the ARV issue has been in the public domain for age. It is almost unthinkable that after so much struggling to get these powerful treatments from the government, that there could be instances of abuse of these drugs. This course of action, described by one interviewee as "morally wrong", needed to be placed in the proper social context when an investigation was made into what caused it. When we delved deeper into the community, the poverty that our subjects lived in made it very clear that the implementation of the ARV's was a troublesome issue.

We had set-out with the purpose of exposing the issue of people who default, in order to keep a CD4 count of below 200 in order to stay sick enough to qualify for the government grant. However, we soon realised that getting people to talk to us openly about the topic would be difficult. We decided to feature many peoples denials of this practice in our piece, to further illustrate the many intricacies surrounding the issue, such as the cultural taboo's that exist. These people are scared of the stigma that is attached to them as a defaulter, and thus are not willing to

come forward. Our crew began to search for a defaulter, and the story became a journey, literally and figuratively.

We were very fortunate to be helped out by Sandile at the Jabez Centre, who took us on this journey through his community. He was able to effectively link us with the community we were seeking, and was a valuable middle-man. It was very important that he helped our cause, and was able to translate for us on most of the interviews. Sandile was the perfect person to take centre-stage within our piece, as he was very well spoken and articulate and a prominent member of the local community. He was enthusiastic on this subject as he works within the field and is passionate about helping others within his community who are living with HIV/ AIDS.

Annelie Van Niekerk of the Raphael Centre was also very helpful in our attempts to find a defaulter. The Jabez Centre and Raphael Centre were both very helpful to us, and it was important for us to foster good relationships with these organisations as we were in constant contact with both.

The narrative of the piece followed our journey in finding a defaulter. Our introduction set out to explain the issue to viewers and place the story within its context, which it did clearly and succinctly, using establishing shots of Extension 9 and the Jabez Centre, and a voice over. We filmed the ladies of the centre singing and placed it in our intro, which captured the very positive attitude and hope within this community, even when it is under such pressure from poverty.

The end of the introduction, with the title, was left without sound. This was in order to clearly signal the end of our introduction and allow us to begin our figurative journey. The shot which we placed our title on was a haunting look at two of the ladies within the Centre, who seem clearly anxious and distressed. This sets the tone for our piece, showing a community suffering from poverty. The first scene after the interview was an off-the cuff interview, in which Bryce asks someone at the centre whether they are on the ARV's. She says she does not, as she is "well." The viewer is immediately introduced to the concept of ARV's and the concept of getting fitter and stronger from the ARV's is reified in the mind of the viewer. We then introduce Sandile, who will take centre-stage as the unofficial lead within our piece. He is able to act as a voice for the

community and a bridge, and speaks on their behalf.

The next voice we hear is that of Yolisa Ngele, who is from our own Rhodes Community. The fact that she is interviewed within Rhodes' surrounds is important as it shows that despite the contrast in surroundings, defaulting on ARV's is a problem facing all sectors of society. She is introduced as an 'activist', which portrays her as someone who is passionate about the subject. At one stage, dropping Yolisa was considered in order to save time, however she was retained due to the simple way she manages to relate certain concepts. Her inclusion is justified in how she is able to provide further explanation for many of the concepts that are introduced by Sandile, and the two complement each other well, being able to talk on behalf of their communities.

These two explain the difficulties that we meet when we set off to find a defaulter. A segment begins in which we interview four different people who state that they know of no-one who defaults. This is in stark contrast to the previous statements from the 'authority voices', who claim that it is commonplace within the community. The cutaway to link-in the segment is taken out of the window of the car, and is used to show the journey we have begun in order to find someone. It is particularly effective in being able to convey movement, which was vital to our concerns. All the people interviewed deny knowledge of defaulting, which is then rationalised and explained, being due to the stigma that surrounds the issue of defaulting. A close-up on Yolisa's face is able to show her emotions surrounding the topic, highlighting the personal nature of the story for her.

From Yolisa's quote, we break into a new segment featuring the Raphael Centre and its manager, Annelie "Jabu" Van Niekerk. Annelie speaks from a position of authority, and speaks of the alarming repercussions of defaulting, namely the mutation of the virus. A cut-away of Xoliswa, an assistant at the Centre, displaying her ARV's and pretending to swallow them is shown. This was shot on the infamous Monday shoot and its inclusion was vital to the quality of the product. To come into contact with the ARV's and see them in use is important in 'demystifying' ARV's and allows the viewer to relate more to them, 'grounding' the concept of ARV's. The mutation angle was vital to our story as it showed sinister implications of the creation of a super-virus as a result of

defaulting.

We then investigate further into the problem, as it grows in urgency, only to find that there are more reasons for defaulting than simple greed and that the choice of life and death that we suspected these people were making, often isn't really a choice at all. This is due to the extreme poverty we encounter when Sandile takes us on a literal journey with him through his community. A few of the shots with Sandile in the car are too long and result in the segment being introduced in a rather clumsy way. In his walk during the shoot, Sandile took us into his house at one stage and showed us a family member whom he claimed was mentally ill. The woman cut a heart-wrenching picture, yet she was not included in the final piece, as she was in obvious suffering and was uncomfortable with our presence. Sandile is effective in showing the conditions in which his community lives and clearly illustrates their dire circumstances. He introduces us to his ex-girlfriend who is an activist who speaks out about the governments need to keep people on the grant. Her admitting to a suicide attempt has a jarring effect on the viewer. Another figure is shown, a weak looking woman who tells a story of a boy who defaults on the ARV's as he cannot take them on an empty stomach. These stories clearly illustrate the problems being faced by the community. The final interview shows Notutu Masini, who has suffered a stroke and is very weak. Her inclusion shows the problems for people mistakenly labeled as defaulters. We then see Sandile, our strong figure reflect on his future, and show signs of vulnerability at the thought of facing this issue. This problem can be seen as affecting everyone. Annelie is the final voice within the piece and is able to give hope at the end of piece, whilst leaving a final foreboding warning.

After the credits, the piece is dedicated to Linda Kumana, who was a patient at the Raphael Centre whom is believed to have died from defaulting. By giving a name to this cause, we are able to stress its importance even more.

The narrative journey that is undertaken is a strong feature of the piece. I'm very proud of the way we were able to fit the different pieces of our story together and make them flow into an uncomplicated, simple and direct narrative. Our piece was an emotional journey, and I feel that we

captured the sombre nature of this story. Although there are a few shaky shots in our cutaways, I feel the camera-work is solid, whilst the sound and editing were very good. Technically the piece is a great achievement, as many of the interviews are outside in windy conditions, yet the sound remains very good. A growing proficiency in the 'boom' mike was invaluable to the quality of the production.