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**Critical Analysis and Self-Reflective Essays-**

**Ten Minute Investigative Documentary**

**Breaking the Silence**

This essay is comprised of two parts- first: this essay shall critically analysis the ten-minute investigative documentary entitled "Breaking the Silence" that was produced by BLOOMERS Productions, of which I am part. Secondly, I shall reflect on my role in producing this documentary and what I felt that I learnt and perhaps what myself as well as the group could have done differently, if anything at all.

In critically analysing the documentary "Breaking the Silence", I shall assess whether we were able to achieve what we had hoped to in setting out on this project. In the early planning stages of this project we laid down our hypothesis, which is a statement of truth that the journalist must then set out to prove. Our hypothesis was that there is intimidation of Zimbabwean students on Rhodes University campus by fellow Zimbabwean students. More specifically, the intimidation is happening to students who are speaking out against the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe by those who support the current government.

In order to prove this statement we had to find someone, or people, who had been intimidated in the past. But that was not enough we also had to interview those who had strong views and opinions about the so-called intimidation of students on campus. These people included Larissa Klazinga (Assistant to Dean of Students), Carla Tsampiras, who spoke at both the march and the candlelight vigil, and Felicity Sibindi, who was the march organiser and who is victim of intimidation and who had to stay in a safe house for her protection. However, we also needed to get the opinions and statements who may not be directly involved in this issue but who might have strong views on it. These included, Pride Jani who is the President of the Zimbabwean Society on campus as well as Keith Kachambwa and Tadinawaneshe Mangwengwende who are both Zimbabwean students. It was important to get the views of other Zimbabweans on campus who hold different views on the same issue and not only one side. What was also extremely important for us to get the views and opinions of those who are supporters of the current government and their policies. (The above mentioned sources are not all the sources that we interviewed.)

In proving our hypothesis in think we succeeded. We had two subjects who wished to remain anonymous because they were afraid of what would happen to them if a copy of the documentary got into the "wrong hands". This in itself was useful to us in

that it proved our hypothesis- they do not want their faces to be seen on camera because they are afraid of what might happen to them or their family back in Zimbabwe. Our hypothesis was further proven by Larissa Klazinga's interview, as well as the interview of Awethu Zumana, the SASCO chairperson at Rhodes, as they both confirmed that students have indeed been intimidated on campus because of their political convictions. This intimidation takes various forms: either it is indirect intimidation in that it is verbal insinuation of what would happen to them or their families if they continued to speak out against the current Mugabe regime. As a result of such intimidation, Felicity Sibindi was placed in a safe house for her safety. Intimidation has also been physical and someone was beaten up last year because of his views. The interview with Sibindi meant that our hypothesis was further proved and the fact that she was a victim on intimidation meant that it made our hypothesis and documentary so much more credible as we were hearing it first hand as opposed to others telling us what they had heard.

The interview with Eleph Gula-Ndebele was extremely invaluable to the documentary as he was a voice that was willing to speak put openly and honestly as one who did not agree with and did not believe that there was any such intimidation going on on campus. It was important to get this side of the story as it is part of the silent struggle and debate going on on campus amongst the Zimbabwean students. This silent debate is what we were trying to give voice to. In the documentary we were to create this debate with the cuts between what Eleph said and then what Felicity said and so on. They both had very different opinions on the same issues, and Felicity was able to shed light on why Eleph had the views that he did-because his father was in the government and thus he could not speak out against the government as that would mean speaking out against his father. Thus I feel that we adequately proved our hypothesis, as well as providing a context for this in terms of the relationship between Rhodes University and Zimbabwe, the nature of life on campus for Zimbabwean students, and relating this to the current situation in Zimbabwe.

However, this does not mean that we covered every avenue, or to use a tired cliché- we did not leave every stone unturned. There we definitely other aspects that we could have added to the piece in order to, in terms of the assessment grid- "demonstrate great insight and skill". Looking back we could have tried to track down the person who

had supposedly been beaten up outside Equilibrium last year. This might have opened up further avenues for us to investigate. We should also have elaborate on the fact that two policemen had been looking for Felicity. The men had dressed up as policemen- we should have asked her to mention this on camera.

One major fault of our piece was that it was very much a 'talking heads' piece and we should have tried to get the subjects to speak in a their natural environments as opposed to a formal setting. However, I think that the latter was more favourable to us in that it meant that we did not have to worry about shaky cameras or 'pissed' cameras. But we should learn to get more creative with our shots and more daring and adventurous as that is the only way that we will learn what work and what does not.

The second part of this essay is self-reflective and I shall comment on my role as camera operator.

It was one of my aims at the start of this year to become more confident with the camera and to thus be able to get creative with the camera. I feel that I felt more confident to do so during SciFest earlier this year than on this project. For some reason I think I felt restricted and felt that because it was a piece a hardcore journalism I had to use classic shots. The result was a piece that was very much talking heads. I still feel wary with the camera but I think that I just need to realise that it is only a camera and that I am in charge of it and not the other way around.

This was not my only woe with the camera. The first four interviews that we conducted we almost unusable due to a fault in our camera as well as our hard-drive. Of those four interviews we were only able to salvage half of Pride's interview and Larissa's interview. This was extremely frustrating for us as we lost an extremely valuable interview with Felicity. It was lucky that we were able to re-do the interview otherwise our documentary would have had a huge big gaping hole in it. It is in situations like these that I cannot help but become disheartened and disappointed as of course no-one wants the work that they have done to be for nothing.

On particular instance that I was frustrated with the camera was during the interview with Chris Kabwato. Chris was wearing a white shirt and his skin is extremely dark. Thus I needed to open the iris of the camera as much as was necessary in order to make sure that Chris's face was visible. For some reason the iris would not open more

that 1.8, which was not enough. Thus Chris's face was not visible enough as the whiteness of his shirt made his skin look even darker.

In terms of sound, I think that our piece had very good sound. It was audible, not too soft or distorted in anyway. This was as a result of the sound workshop that we had at the beginning of the term. Without it we never have been able to produce sound of adequate quality. Thus I think that this workshop should happen at the beginning of the year and not in the second term.

I think that I have learnt a lot this term with relation to camera work as this is the first project of this kind that we have ever done. Hopefully the next project that we have will be better in terms of camera with relation to lighting subjects, cutaways as well, and in terms of creatively setting up interviews with our subjects in their natural environments.

This project definitely saw an improvement in the ways in which we communicated with each other. On our first assignment we were still getting to know each other and learning how we worked. This meant that we did not really communicate our feelings to each other. This time around however, we were able to communicate to each other our feelings and thus resolve our conflict with each other when it occurred. The main problem that I had on this project was that for the first few weeks I felt that Jenny did not really take on her role as director. She was putting her other commitments above this assignment, as so Thami and I were taking on all the work that should have been split up between three not two. I was disappointed that it had turned that way and I did not want the rest of the assignment or the year for that matter to continue like that.

When Jenny and I spoke about this and I made her realise that no matter what her views were, television and the assignment had to take precedence over her other commitments as this is what we are at university for. Conflict also arose after shots that did not turn out the way we wanted them to, or when we were feeling the pressure of the deadline looming over us. Jenny mentioned to me that we definitely had more conflict on this assignment than on the others. This is true, however, what was important is that we were able to work through, talk through and deal with our issues and conflict meant that we are extremely empathetic and supportive of each other. At the end of the day we all realised that we are working toward the same goal and that unless we worked together we

would not to justice to the subject matter and would not produce a piece of work that did justice to our skills.

Overall I feel that as our first piece of work of this nature, we did extremely well. We were able to produce a ten-minute piece of a high standard that met the deadline, which in the industry is something that is not negotiable. You cannot sacrifice one for the other. You need to work well enough as a group as well as individuals in order to produce high standard output on time. This means that we all need to have faith in the ability of the other members in the group to fulfil their duties to the best of their ability. We cannot undermine each other, but must rather come to decision together so that we are all happy with the final product.