

#### **Journalism and Media Studies 4**

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**Executive Producer:** Paul Hills

**Assignment:** Write a critical analysis of about 1000 words on your 10 minute documentary.

**Deadline:** 25 May 2007

When we were first filming the documentary- *Breaking the Silence*, our goal was to investigate whether there was really intimidation towards politically outspoken Zimbabweans on campus, and we began from the hypothesis that there was intimidation- what we wanted was a myriad of perspectives on whether this was true or not- in this regard I think that we achieved our goal because we received a response from three categories of people- those who said there was definitely intimidation and could account for it from personal experience, those who said that there was definitely no intimidation on campus and lastly, those who did not directly choose sides.

In looking for our participants we chose people who had positions of power in whatever aspect that we needed them to. Felicity is a powerful voice against the Zimbabwean government, Chris Kabwato is a Zimbabwean citizen and holds a top level position in the journalism department- we felt his response would be on a more mature level, taking into account all sides of the debate. Eleph Ndebele was pointed out to us as one of the people who had been doing the intimidating and he is interestingly the son of the Attorney-General in Zimbabwe. Pride Jani is the president of Zimsoc, Larrisa Klazinga is the assistant to the Dean of Students and she is particularly involved in looking deeper into the allegations of Zimbabwe.

Contacting the participants proved to be a very difficult task. Felicity and Larissa agreed quite readily, however when their interviews had to be redone because of technical reasons, they did not seem so eager. Felicity's reason was that she felt that she was being turned into some kind of celebrity and the focus was moving away from the importance of the Zimbabwean situation, which to some degree I understood. Our most difficult moment came in trying to put together focus groups. For the first focus group (made up of those who are openly against the Zimbabwean government) a lot of people seemed eager to participate- with over 10 positive responses we were confident about it. For the second focus group I had spoken to a few Zimbabwean students that I knew and they agreed to participate- however the closer it came to the date, a lot of them pulled out. I spoke to Pride (the Zimsoc president) and asked if he could organize a group for us, which he happily agreed to, but two days before the focus group was supposed to be held- he also came up with unclear excuses as to why people could no longer make it to the focus group.

The decided path of filming kept changing and it was really during the final editing process that a narrative became clear. Fortunately the amount of footage we had ensured that we could put a suitable story together, even though there were a lot of talking heads. To add to cutaways we asked Karabo Sekoto who took pictures of the march for Zimbabwe to help us out, and we took some footage from the documentary-*Never the same again*.

In reviewing our piece I could not point out a main arc, this is because everything seems to be important-the beginning the middle and the end. The beginning is basically introducing the situation in Zimbabwe so that the viewer knows where the topic of the documentary stems from. Chris's comments on Zimbabwe and the links it has with Rhodes University was very useful in this regard, however we did have problems with the outcome of our footage. Chris was wearing a white shirt, and against dark skin this was not good-therefore we had to zoom into his face, and colour correct, which was not perfect. We did attempt another interview with him but that was also problematic as we lost a lot of footage and sound. What we did then throughout the piece was to choose important statements from both pieces of footage and use both instances in the piece. The middle part is on the allegations of intimidation. I particularly like the beginning of this part where we have an anonymous student basically saying that he does not want to talk about politics because it is too dangerous. I think the voice-overs added to the movement of the piece-even though they were 'too sweet' as our executive producer, Paul, pointed out, another important part of the middle was the introduction of Felicity who was our main case study and who makes a great part of the piece. The end of the piece was a round up-what is to be done about intimidation and so on- it is here where we have a range of people-from those who say it can not be tolerated, to those who say we should not talk about it and should respect those who do not stand up. Throughout the piece, my favourite parts are the introduction with the pictures and the end with the credits running with the Zimbabwean national anthem; I think that creates a deep emotional element for the piece.

Admittedly there are many technically imperfect elements in our piece, partly from the footage shot and partly from post-production-editing, and from this I learned a lot-however I have to disagree with Derek who, in the studio show commented that our piece

was not investigative-compared to other media pieces on the topic of Zimbabwean Intimidation. I think we dug very deep and were able to show many sides and to prove that there was intimidation by the very fact that we had people who were reluctant to speak or those who wanted to appear anonymously.