

## **SEL-REFLEXIVE REPORT**

The individual documentary assignment was a very exciting venture for me at first. I had already come up with an idea in my third year.

However, I found that I could not go through with the idea I had to begin with, because to my initial dismay we were told that our documentaries would have to be in a time frame of only six minutes (which was then reduced to five minutes). However my disappointment, during the course of the production of both our group project and the individual assignment, soon turned to relief because of the amount of time we had in order to complete it.

My initial idea was to do a documentary on hip-hop culture in Grahamstown, as it was of major interest to me how the culture of hip-hop which was once so rich and vibrant in Grahamstown, even reaching places throughout the country; had dwindled to almost non-existent. I had started to work on the documentary in the second term, doing some filming of hip-hop sessions here and there and had become closely acquainted with people who could assist me in getting sources and other relevant footage.

However, I thought that it might not do justice to make a such a piece into five minutes, and balancing a group assignment with something which was personally important for me to do, would be too much work, so I went for other options. Luckily the footage for the hip-hop piece that I had gotten so far was not so great. Also, I was advised by one of my classmates, Amanda Sibanda that pursuing a mini-documentary on the subject would have been too typical of a choice for me to do.

The next idea which came to mind, and which I decided to follow through was the experience of having African hair, which is very hard to maintain in its natural state because of its kinky texture and also, depending on its texture and style, just like any hair, it is said to say a lot about a person's personality and pedigree, things which have other stereotypes attached to them.

I jotted down ideas and had a lot of different footage in mind. I also asked people who were interested enough to offer ideas. I spoke to Khubu Meth, a scriptwriter I had interned for in my third year who gave me some suggestions such as using posters of famous celebrities who fit the ideal of beautiful black women and comparing their hair. Another suggestion I was given to a friend was to speak to a man called Theo, who is better known by those who know him better as 'Snoop

Dogg'. This Snoop Dogg was apparently a hairdresser who had an interesting TV face because of numerous piercings, who once did women's hair for a living but now works at Rhodes, I made several attempts to contact him, even visiting his old hair salon and calling him but he unfortunately did not come through, this dampened my eagerness in the project.

Another plan which I wanted to go ahead with was using me in the documentary, as I changed hairstyles. This did happen, for many reasons, finances and most importantly, I could not find someone who was capable and willing to film the whole process at the hair salon. However I did film quite interesting footage at hair salon with the typical girly chatting, and five hairdressers working on one head, hairpieces, posters, price boards, combs etc. This was filmed on my last day of filming and with the rush and stress of trying to capture footage off the tape onto Adobe, a lot of this footage was corrupt. The little bit of the footage I had was too arbitrary to put into the documentary, instead I used a little clip at the very beginning in one of the blocks on the first scene

The first filming I did was of Alude singing in the drama department, which was a wearisome process to arrange. I had to speak to Clay Williams of the drama department to set up a slot when I might be able to make use of the Rhodes theatre's main stage. Clay, although warm, was adamant that he would have to pull strings for me to find a free slot as the third term is very busy for the drama students. However, in the end we managed to find a slot, Alude was also pressed for time as she was in the process of directing a play and rehearsing for a play that she was performing in. Clay and Alude were very patient during filming, with Clay taking control of the smoke machine and lights and Alude providing me with the only music to be used in the play. I was very proud to have contributed the music myself, which was less copyright stress.

One thing Paul had first warned me about with this project was how to make the piece relevant to people who could not relate to the issue of black hair and identity. I took this into consideration and decided that interviewing guys was as far as I should get with that aspect because those that I interviewed at least had opinions about African hair (most of them giving consensus that natural hair was most attractive to them - thus creating a pattern of a unified response from men). Other ideas with regards to making the documentary accessible to others, who fell out of the "black woman" demographic was to get some people with dreadlocks to speak

about what such hair contributed to their identity and how this linked with other ideas of dreaded hair; such as Rastafarianism, sangomas and things like that. Also, I thought asking other ethnic groups with 'other' hair if they had any questions for women with hair such as mine, but the few that I approached said they did not have much of an opinion and this might not mean anything in the final end product.

One thing I found of the final documentary is that although I enjoyed watching it, and my friends did as well; it was mostly due the content and responses. Friends could not judge on technical problems which I felt were very many. I notice that my camera work was rather dismal at some points, that even though I used a tripod, I did not have control of the camera in some parts which was rather disappointing.

Amongst other factors, I think one of the reasons was that my confidence levels were not very high in filming alone, as opposed to in a group, another thing was that I was asking questions (mostly with a microphone in hand) and filming at the same time. I do not think it was up to the standard that I am capable of and it was very rushed, basically I very proud of the concept and I feel that if I had put more time into it, I could have added more to it –a matter of good choice, bad execution. Luckily I still have clips saved on a hard drive and given time, I could re-edit the piece for my show reel.