

*Queens of Pefferville* – an academic essay...

*Queens of Pefferville* is a brief look into the lives of a group of gay men in Pefferville, during a week when they prepare to take part in a drag show. Through the piece I attempted to show the viewer how one's identity as a gay male impacts one's life. In the beginning the two characters of Terence Spalding and Ashton Joubert talk about their experiences of acceptance in their families and their communities. By intercutting the two characters stories in the introduction of the piece I attempted to build a relationship between the viewer and the characters in order to break down the barriers of otherness.

By representing these men as timid in the beginning of the piece I intended to show the vulnerability of the human condition as through this I felt that any viewer, no matter what their sexuality and beliefs are, could connect with the characters. As the piece continues the confidence in these men comes through despite homophobic peoples judgements these men are ordinary people with unique personalities who are trying to live their lives despite the homophobic judgements of society.

In the production of this piece I did not envision changing peoples ideas about homosexuality as I did not feel I had enough time, however I did hope to produce a piece which homophobic people could tolerate and hold their attention for the duration of the piece and perhaps generate a level on which they could relate to the characters. Although I introduce the vulnerability of these men early in the piece the introduction of the fact that they are doing this to help people infected with HIV/AIDS changes peoples perceptions of the men. Where as laymen would assume that the men were initially holding the show in order to get attention it becomes evident that they truly are trying to help their community.

When filming the piece I followed an observational approach for the most part except for set up interviews where I positioned the subject and added lighting. The piece has a definite sense of 'real-time' particularly in the sequences that show the preparation for the big event. All the voices in the piece are those of gay men this was to create a flow through the piece and also to give the sense that they were telling their own story. There is no voiceover telling the viewer what to think or what conclusions to draw, the piece allows the viewer to draw their own conclusions about the issues of identity.

Shiela Curran Bernard (2004) suggests that in order to move a story forward through time often “involves the interweaving of chronological and nonchronological elements to form a cohesive whole; a film that drives forward while being enriched and made complex by elements outside or apart from the chronology” (2004: 64). My initial rough edit of *Queens of Pefferville* depended more on a chronological layout of events as they happened, the re-edited final version interweaves both chronological and nonchronological elements and therefore the story flows better as there is more context to the visuals. In the final edit I made use of wide establishing shots in order to indicate the passage of time.

Over the production of *Queens of Pefferville* the story changed slightly, this is common in journalism as no story is stagnant. The final product meets the ideas stipulated in the initial proposal but did not really explore their Christian identity. However it did explore their identities as a group of gay men trying to enrich the lives of their community in their own creative way.

#### References:

Bernard, Shiela Curran. 2004. *Documentary storytelling for film and videomakers*. Focal Press: Oxford.