

Self Reflective and Critical Analysis piece

After brainstorming ideas for our 24 minute documentary, Lindile and I felt that the abortion story was the strongest, both visually and in terms of substance because of its currency. The main task at hand was trying to get hold of people who would be willing to share their abortion experiences with us, whether in their capacity as medical workers, parents or simply as people who have had (an) abortion(s). Getting the above mentioned people, and getting them to speak on camera was like looking for a needle in a hay stack. I was very excited about the story and the potential it had in terms of the storyline and the types of effects we could use with the shot sizes etc, but I was constantly let down by the way that people responded to the topic as a whole – like abortions are something that do not happen, and that they are not meant to be discussed – and of course by the negativity of a group member. Sigh.

Having moved from one idea to the next because Jans cannot bare to have anything that he says turned down, I finally caved in to give the Tsitsikama idea a go. Here is a glimpse of my diary and what I was thinking at the time:

“Bitter-sweet: yet again I am at my wits end with Jans. Truly speaking, I cannot wait until the end of this assignment, the end of this term, and the end of working with him. After a semester on media studies – focusing on race and representation – one would assume that he took something out of it. He still insists that everyone in Grahamstown has access to water – really? – and that if they don't have access then they haven't asked for the water – which world does he come from? The municipality is meant to provide those services, but does it do it effectively? No. We have heard that time and time again. But his answer to the question is yes. *sigh*.

When a group is doing a group project, there is no I in team as they say. He seems to think that he can absolve himself from any of the criticisms we might get from this piece (the abortion or water piece), if he says that he was against the idea from the beginning. Negativity before any project invites the spirit of doom. Because we are not going with his idea, like a child he throws all his toys out of the cot. Seriously? How ironic that he rejected the concept I had pitched for the chase sequence we did at the beginning of the first term. Lindile and I managed to fight for it, we ended up filming and editing it, and it's the piece that took him to the Cannes Festival. "

The documentary had the potential to be a great social documentary, especially because of the topics that we had in mind. The end product is not satisfactory at all and I do not think that it is a reflection of the quality of work I am capable of producing. The documentary lacks in the people aspect, which could have made it more powerful. Instead of looking into the lives of people who are truly affected by the restrictions in fishing, and showing how opening up the protected areas could truly benefit their lives, we have 'white' men – talking heads – talking about an issue that does not affect them as much as the people who need the fish to make ends meet.

We went down to the Tsitsikama area a day earlier than we had intended to leave because I had suggested that we take that day to look for potential case studies – people who are affected the most by the restrictions - whom we can follow. I was assured by Jans that he had found them and we would go fishing with them on Sunday. Only to find myself on the Sunday, going to a fishing area with 4 'white' Afrikaans men, who are 'affected' by the restrictions. They have permission to go through a friend's farm to go and fish, and the fishing area is accessible to them because of the 4 x 4 trucks they drive. Therefore, they were not the

people that I thought would make an impact in our documentary. Jans felt differently about this. This angered me because I feel that despite the fact that he was the person who pitched the story, he completely missed what I thought was the point of the story – to give a voice and face to the people who need the fishing areas to survive. People who are not fishing for leisure, and people who feel that they deserve the land and the right to fish in those areas. Not people who fish for leisure and who have the ability to drive long distances to get to the fishing areas. I feel that the whole semester of media studies was thrown down the toilet by Jans and so the documentary failed dismally.

I felt powerless because I felt that since he had 'planned' everything, the Executive Producer seemed to actually believe that Jans is capable of doing a good job at this (He seems to be the one the Executive Producer trusts, given that when he deleted Lindile and I's work, he took Jans' word for it about the footage having been in the 'wrong' folder. When a computer is shared by the 3 people in a group, I assumed that no one has carte blanche over the computer, and that there is a level of respect in terms of the way that documents are handled on that particular computer. I guess I was wrong). I was worried about the fact that Jans is a talker and not a doer, therefore, his individual documentary would also suffer. When I expressed this, the Executive Producer asked Jans to promise that he would not let any of the above suffer. Jans promised. But like I stated before, Jans is a talker, not a doer. I knew that Jans was not capable. He is all bark and no bite. He is someone who enjoys the idea of responsibility but cannot go the extra mile for it. When he talks about ideas he talks about them in the 'I' and when ideas fail, a 'we' seems to feature in the equation. He cannot be wrong because somehow he knows everything. Therefore, this time I decided to sit back and actually see if he could prove me wrong. Unfortunately, he did not.

Jans had a week to transcribe the Afrikaans dialogue to English so that we could start editing. The transcription never happened. There is no Afrikaans to English transcription at this moment as we speak. Therefore, Lindile and I could not contribute much to the edit, and because putting random cut aways in random areas does not constitute as editing in my books, I needed to know what exactly was happening in order for me to be useful in the editing process. I think that Jans did not do the transcription as a way to control the edit for the documentary because in all our previous work, Lindile and I have been more in control of the edit.

I cannot actually believe that Jans feels that this documentary is good enough for 50/50, or even better, that we have the best documentary out of the whole class. I am not sure whether to laugh or cry about this and this is why:

The whole documentary is disjointed. The people in the documentary do not tell a story, and the voice-over is what the viewer has to rely on to tell the story – I think that the voice over should be an aid and not the above. The transitions are not smooth and some of them do not make sense. There is a heavy reliance on the voice-over and so in some parts I feel that the voiceover makes the story an 'us and them' type of story.

The 'documentary' itself takes too long to begin and so someone who is watching this at home will probably switch to a different channel within a minute of watching because it does not grab the viewer from the beginning.

I felt like I was watching a children's programme because of the excessive use of colour in the subtitle palettes. The cutaways seemed very randomly placed throughout the documentary, and there was an excessive amount of zooming in and out when it came to the maps, documents and other footage. Some of the footage was over-exposed

and the lighting needed some adjusting. We definitely had better shots in our archives and so there were some poor shots chosen and used in the final documentary.