

There were three students interested in the *Channel 26* short filmmaking cycle 1. J, S and S. They were briefed about what *Channel 26* and what are expected from the participants. J and S are not new to short filmmaking. These two students had already done a previous short film in the facility. All three of them had already been exposed to short films and had engaged in discussions surrounding this medium.

DAY 1- MONDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2010

Registration forms and the time-sheets were handed to the students. One of the students had been released from the facility and we are down to two students now. J and S filled the forms. I thought of opening the class for a possible dialogue about *Channel 26* and Art. *However I was disappointed that these two students had very little interest in engaging in such a dialogue. I believe that one possibility of this might be their lack of exposure to institutionalized creative environments.*

We started discussing possible story lines. One of the initial ideas that came about was making a short film about a person fishing out in the open sea. The story was about a lone man sitting on a boat. S was very excited about this project. *I was not very sure about the technical feasibility to take on such a task. I tried to explain a little bit more about such issues but it seemed that none of them were able to grasp technical issues. I tried to get them to steer away from this idea by giving them a topic; I am or aharen nakee.* I am or aharen nakee is a topic that we have been using throughout the projects that we have been creating so far. J and S tried to connect this to their *Man on a boat* story.

The legal issues in not being able to show their faces came up. We discussed about masking their faces in the editing. *I explained to them that instead of giving the power of their representation to someone else, we need to find a creative way to represent themselves.* We all came up with very creative ideas, from using animated figures to simply putting something over their head. We started to get bored with this process. We all agreed to write a one page story about ourself. We also agreed that we will keep the writing as simple as possible without a conscious overarching plot.

We spent rest of the class, painting on tshirts. While we were engaged in this process we somehow started to talk about our lives. J and S shared how they were brought to the facility. S was particularly interested in sharing his story and explained about the *group* that he belonged to and how he got suspended from his school and eventually ended spending a night in jail.

Our discussions led us to the idea of hiding their [REDACTED] and recording these stories by placing a cellphone camera inside [REDACTED] while another student films this process. *I was very excited about this as they seem to be opening up in to exploring such creative experiments.*

Although we did not know exactly what visuals we were going to shoot, we all seemed happy with the direction we were going. Our next contact period is the following Monday and that was our deadline as well. So we decided to finish the writing part by Thursday and shoot the same day.

DAY 2- THURSDAY 23

Thursday was a rainy day. We started the class around 9:30 in the morning. J and S brought their one page story. *I got S to read out his story first.* It was a very simple story. Basically the story contained three parts: His indefinite suspension from school, his eventual involvement in a *group*, His current detention. Before J could present his story, S had to be excused for a doctor's appointment. We waited for S to return, but then decided to continue with J's story without S to save us time as we still needed to figure out our exact visuals. J presented his story and his story had an uncanny similarity to S's story to the point that it almost seemed like they set together to write the story. *I was not sure if I wanted to take up this issue and try to figure out if these were authentic stories. I decided that I will let this go as I felt that the authenticity of their stories were not my issue. I was more than happy that they took the effort to write one page.*

S returned shortly and J narrated his story to S again. We all understood that these two stories were very similar.

Our initial idea was to shoot at the beach while sitting on a chair. When we arrived at the beach we saw a large piece of drift wood. We immediately decided to discard the chair and sit on the piece of wood instead.

We had very unpredictable weather so we had to shoot pretty fast. We did not really have any direction in regards to camera angles etc. I went first while J and S did the camera. What we found really neat was the fact that we were not able to hear anything the subject was saying. We simply rolled until the subject took off the [REDACTED].

Due to weather we had to take three breaks before we were happy with what we had. Total amount of materials we got was about ten minutes. We decided to inter cut each others story randomly and to represent each second of the movie to a day that they had spent in this detention center.

We agreed that I will do a rough edit and show them next Monday and they will give me feedback and notes on what they would like changed.

Editing was very straight forward. As we did not have a lot of material to work with. It took a few hours to splice an edit together. However in this process I realized that in order to represent each second to a day that they had spent at the centre, would make

the film to come to about 6 minutes in length. Somewhere along the process we all seemed to have forgotten about this. In the editing I tried to combine related sentences closer to each other.

DAY 3- MONDAY 27

We started the class with the screening of what I had edited. J and S loved the film. *I was not sure if they were watching the film with a critical eye. I realized that they were simply enjoying seeing themselves on the screen.* There was very little to change. I submitted the film to the centre for them to review it before we made the final cut.

This is when the issue of them [REDACTED] faces came up. Their argument was that such a representation will be read very negatively by the public. *I argued that these are individuals who were subverting and playing on how the media represents them. However this argument boiled down to the fact that these were minors and they are unable to understand and formulate how they should be represented in the media. I personally agreed with this statement, however trying to censor works for the protection of the children verses censoring works for the protection of an institution was clearly not the right reason in my view.*

TUESDAY 28

We were given a chance to do a screening to a person in Male'. I arranged for a screening with him for the next evening. While he too had issues about the children's representation he seemed a bit more flexible and agreed to do a screening with the Juvenile Justice Unit. He agreed to OK the film as long as JJU was OK with the film.

TUESDAY 28

I got an answer the next day. JJU was not happy with the representation. In fact we had to remove any writing on the film or on any material that might point to the children [REDACTED].

TUESDAY 28

I had to insert a black mask on their faces through out the film.

note:

Our media is filled with stories about juveniles committing violent crimes. We hear people coming out and giving numerous solutions to this problem. We see a number of people pointing fingers at each other.

We seldom hear these children's stories. It is various institution and agencies that shape these children's representation. Often such third party representations are masked, altered, and at times blatantly distorted for various reasons. This film is not a blanket representation of the juveniles in detention. This is a tiny project that gave a chance for two kids to tell their stories. I believe we have done injustice to a creative project, by censoring parts of the visuals.