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Framing The Other

**What did you learn from this short documentary film that surprised you about race, class, and inequality in the global economy?**

The video “Framing The Other” gives me a lot of insights into the life of the Mursi tribe and how the influx of Western tourists has changed the way they live and express themselves. The interactions between the Dutch woman and the Mursi have shown that Western people viewed themselves as superior, while the Mursi had to serve the tourists well to make money. For the tourists, when they think of the Mursi, they think of lip plates, horns, and good photos. It seems to me that they simply went to the village to take photos, not to understand the lives of the Mursi. The superiority is also shown in how the tourists bargained to take photos and chose the Mursi they like to be in their photos as if they were picking out the best products on the shelves (e.g. when the woman asked the boy to leave the photo). For them, decorations of the horns and the lip plates are more important than how Mursi women get their lips cut in their early ages. Another scene that struck me was when the Dutch tourist kept asking the Mursi woman to put on the lip plate instead of faking it. It seems that the tourists assumed the Mursi had the responsibility to make themselves pretty and interesting to look at since they were paying them money. After the trip, the Dutch woman expressed her intention to go back to “make contact” with the local people and understand their lives better. From her sharing after the trip, I think she did not intentionally act superior. However, the idea that she came from a higher social class, a more superior race and a more well-educated background had been instilled in her for so long that made her act superior.

Inequality also emerges in how the Mursi people modified their traditions and wore “fake” decorations to make themselves look better to the tourists. In fact, they acted inferior to Western tourists because they knew they needed money from the tourists and that was the only way they can support their lives through droughts and land loss. It was also mentioned in the video that new goods introduced by outsiders were a challenge for the Mursi tribe, which makes them increasingly dependent on tourists and their cameras. From the sharing of the Mursi woman, we can tell that they did not have a high opinion of the Western tourists. The Mursi thought that the tourists were disrespectful by not saying goodbyes and by changing their attitudes when it came down to money. However, because of the differences in race and class, as well as the hard situations they were experiencing, they were still respectful to the tourists and did what they were asked to do. The complex relationship between the tourists and the Mursi tribe demonstrates the inequality in the global economy, which shapes how people of different social classes treat each other.  What surprised me the most throughout the video is the attitude of the Dutch tourist - how she seems to be excited and sympathetic with the local people but acted disrespectfully to the local people and their culture.