Sophie Osunkoya

Professor Gitelman

Text and Ideas: Objectivity (2:00 pm)

May 1st, 2023

Documentary Call for Proposal

Title: NYU Staff: The Backbone of the University

Producer: Sophie Osunkoya

Director: Linda Mills

Cameraperson: To be determined

Sound recordist: To be determined

Editor: Sophie Osunkoya

Other Contributors: Anh Nguyen and Professor Gitleman

**Background**:

New York University is a prestigious institution in the heart of one of the most densely populated cities in the nation. NYU prides itself on being a stellar research university with one of the most diverse student bodies in the world. A lot of people aspire to be part of the magic and success that happens at New York University but only about 12% of my graduating class got that chance. NYU is an atmosphere that is filled with endless opportunities and possibilities through attention to detail, preparation, and most importantly efficient execution. Which introduces the question on everybody’s mind… what makes NYU the astounding university that it is? There are a lot of factors that work behind the scenes toward the progression and success of this institution, but the backbone of this university is the operational employees. The operations staff work relentlessly every day for NYU to operate in the seamless manner that it does. Employees like the security, the dining hall staff, and even the janitors take care of fundamental parts of the functionality of this university for a fraction of the amount of money the students pay to be at this institution. We wouldn't be able to survive in the city without protection, nutrition, or a healthy and clean environment all provided for us by the operational employees  As the new president of this distinguished university, it is in your best interest to delve into an unfiltered documentary on the vitality of the operational employees of our university. Additionally, this would serve as the best introduction you could receive to the university because you get to meet and talk to men and women that represent the essence of this university.

**Scope of Project Work (Dos and Don’ts):**

Filming and developing the most raw and unedited documentary is the primary goal of this project. These employees deserve to be represented in their natural light in order for their work to shine and their impact to be highlighted. In order to have a clear direction I have drawn up some fundamental guidelines and suggestions for the documentary. To provide evidence that my suggestions work I have included quotes from Agee and Evans *Let us now praise famous men*, that support every assertion.

1. DO- Acknowledge your personal connection to the matter prior to depicting the lives of the subjects. It adds to credibility if you acknowledge any implicit bias before filming, even when you have no plans of letting that bias affect the documentary. “That I differ with both opinions is a point worth mentioning but not worth arguing” (LUNPFM 349). Agee acknowledges his opinions throughout the documentary just to let the reader know that they existed even though they didn’t necessarily affect the reader’s experience of the documentary.

2. DO NOT- Refrain from adding fictional details in order to make the documentary more interesting for the mainstream audience. This could unintentionally add something that doesn’t adequately portray these employees and obstruct the genuineness and transparency of the documentary. That is similar to what Agee had done in the documentary of the three white tenants “I must let the least of them be, whether I am boring you, or whether I am taking too long getting started, and too clumsily. If I bore you, that is that” (LUNPFM 10). Agee decided to leave everything in his documentary no matter how boring it may be.

3. DO NOT- Relying solely on testimonials or confessionals from these employees will not be beneficial for us in our goal of recording a raw and unfiltered documentary because words are not as reliable as videos and images from a camera. In Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, Agee supports my claim that words are unreliable by asserting “Words could, I believe, be made to do or to tell anything within human conceit. That is more than can be said of the instruments of any other art. But it must be added of words that they are the most inevitably inaccurate of all mediums of record and communication” (LUNPFM 36). Employees' opinions on their experience and contribution at the university may be biased or inaccurate so recording what happens for the viewer is a more accurate portrayal.

4. DO NOT- Judge subjects for their circumstances. For us to have a holistic perspective of the employees we are evaluating, we will need to follow them to their usual environments. Just because the living circumstances or everyday activities may defer from what one may be used to does give us the entitlement to judge. Agee did a poor job of not judging when he states, “The beds, the bedding, and the vermin are such a crime against sex and the need of rest as no sadistic genius could much improve on” (LUNPFM 210). We will follow our subjects to report on how working at the university impacts their lives, not judge them.

5. Do- Go in with no hopes or expectations but to portray what a day in the life of these individuals looks like. Going into developing this documentary and reporting on these subjects with hopes and aspirations for a particular outcome is detrimental to the reliability of this documentary. One could be led to only show parts of the documentary that fit the narrative they hoped to push out. Agee went into his documentary with no clarity or hopes just aiming to proclaim the truth “But to a person of my uncertainty, undertaking a task of this sort, that plane and manner are not within reach, and could only falsify what by this manner of effort may at least less hopelessly approach clarity and truth” (LUNPFM 11).

**Timelines:**

I believe that this project will be extremely beneficial for incoming students to watch during orientation for them to get insight into a crucial part of the institution that they have chosen to spend the next 4 years of their life. In order for that to be a possibility I would hope for the documentary to be filmed, edited, and screened before August 20th, 2024. It will not be ready for the fall of 2023 but hopefully giving the project an additional year will allow for it to be properly executed.

**Budget:**

Filming, producing, and directing a documentary of this caliber at a school like NYU will be quite expensive. The operational staff department at NYU is big and if we are to follow and document with cameras and a state-of-the-art production team for at least one person from every sub-department for a whole day that would account for up to 10,000 dollars. With additional expenses that may come up in the foreseeable future, I believe a smart budget will be 50,000 dollars.

**Closing Sales Pitch:**

A documentary that highlights the outstanding men and women that are fundamental contributors to the stellar reputation that NYU has, is an amazing way to show them that they are valued and promote awareness of their impact on students and people outside the NYU community. As President, I implore you to weigh the pros and cons of a documentary of this caliber, and the advantages will prove to outweigh any cost of producing this documentary. Your experience creating documentaries in the past will prove extremely valuable in the development of this documentary which would in turn allow this project to flourish and add to your contribution to this university’s legacy

Work Cited

Agee, James, et al. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Penguin, 1941.