

THROUGH A CLEAR LENS FINAL REPORT

PRODUCED BY HEADLINES THEATRE

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Venus Soberanes

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Adam Harrison

"I'm glad that I was able to participate in a project like "Through a clear lens". I hope we can do more things like that. "Through a clear lens" is a way to prevent police violence from increasing and to help to stop it. It is also a way to know the good police people and to stand up for them."

Eva Urrutia

"Through my time working and witnessing police interaction with people on the street, I have been reminded of the huge need for public awareness. I would like to see a similar project in the future, because the issues of poverty and policing continually need addressing."

Gabrielle Martin

This project started as a "little idea" that I thought would never come to fruition. Getting the funds to do it was a pleasant (and somewhat shocking) surprise. It was very difficult on many levels, but also ground-breaking -- and it seems to me that ground-breaking has a tendency to always be difficult.

I think its appropriate to hear first from the videographers and the mentor on the project. A longer report from me (David Diamond) follows:

My name is Venus Soberanes. I was one of the young filmmakers of "Through a Clear Lens", and I would like to share some of the experiences and insights I had while I participated in this project.

During the making of this project I learned the necessary technical and practical skills to make a documentary. Through a series of workshops with professional documentary filmmakers such as Nettie Wild, I learned the theory of documentary, and by actually going to the streets and filming people and situations, I learned the practical side of documentary making.

In the nights and hours I spent people-watching, I had the chance to reflect on my experiences as a landed immigrant integrating myself into a different culture and society. I also had the opportunity to learn more about the culture I am living in by looking at it from a detached perspective. And in being a conscious witness, I witnessed a part of reality which is usually overlooked.

Coming from a different country where police corruption and violence are expressed openly, I had strong feelings of anger and helplessness for there is not much that can be done about such behaviors without dangerously exposing oneself. By participating in this project my purposeless feelings of anger and helplessness were transformed into a practical activism, and this allowed me to feel useful to society by sharing my experiences as a witness of social unfairness and discrimination.

I strongly believe that exposing the injustice that I have observed allows and even forces social change, for doing so creates a larger community of witnesses of those sorts of situations that otherwise would remain hidden and unnoticed.

I enjoyed the project a lot. Even though it was very hard to be an immobile spectator at times, I believe that the visual information we gathered in the process of this project is a powerful tool that will promote social change to happen.

Venus Soberanes

During all the time I'd work in "Through a Clear Lens" video project I did learn a lot. It was a really important experience for me as a young person who works for Justice to be involved in a project like this, because I had the opportunity to see a lot of the injustice that happens in the Vancouver East Side.

I realize that is not easy to catch police violence with only one or two cameras. Even though I witnessed police violence and one time I did film it. Many people with I have talked to did tell me about their own experiences with police brutality and police harassment. They didn't want to talk in front of the camera because they were afraid to be recognized by the police later. Any ways I did learn that there are good police people too. I learned that nothing is black and white.

It was hard to be out in the street and sometimes not be able to catch any thing. "Through a Clear Lens" I saw the power of the police. The way that they behave with people who have no power at all. It is impossible to follow them to the places where they hit people. They know how to hide themselves. We couldn't get there because it was dangerous for us.

Anyway I'm glad that I was able to participate in a project like "Through a Clear Lens". I hope we can do more things like that. "Through a Clear Lens" is a way to prevent police violence from increasing and to help to stop it. It is also a way to know the good police people and to stand up for them.

Eva Urrutia

My experiences working on the clear lens project were very diverse. The idea of the project was and is very exciting, and will hopefully enable more opportunities for these kinds of projects.

Police interaction with poor people in Vancouver is a very sensitive issue. An issue that has not been given enough attention. I am glad I was able to be part of this project, though I feel like it was more of a process than a project. A process of trial and error in which I became more aware of the underworkings between the police and the poor.

There were many aspects to working on this project, more than just operating the camera. I had to challenge and question my own beliefs around right and wrong.

Working with a team of diverse people often brings up its own challenges and it put to the test my ability to communicate well in often stressful environments and situations. At times it was really hard and despite initial discussions about safety precautions, there were situations when me, and other involved youth were not safe.

Overall my involvement in this project was worthwhile, and I would like to see more projects like this develop. Attempting this kind of project was very difficult because of the lack of relevant resources available to us. I think it's important for Headlines Theatre to be able to link with other groups who have interest in doing similar projects. The information our group came to learn is very valuable and should be shared with others.

Through my time working and witnessing police interaction with people on the street, I have been reminded of the huge need for public awareness. I would like to see a similar project in the future, because the issues of poverty and policing continually need addressing.

Gabrielle Martin

The Clear Lens project has, for me, been a way for me to see first hand what I had previously known existed, but could not prove. Now, although this project has been a tough one, I can show myself and others first-hand proof of something that many people refuse to believe. While, as you (David) said, I was hoping and expecting to get the Rodney King footage, I eventually realized that this was a near impossible task. While this doubtlessly goes on, the perpetrators understandably take every precaution to ensure that the wrong people aren't watching. While they may not fully understand why we are those wrong people, we still have limited access to places that are not terribly unlikely places for the kind of people that are part of the team. Needless to say, it would be a lot more alarming to a potentially violent Police Officer to see a small group of people that they know are not frequenters of the neighborhood, carrying suspicious bags with small black holes in the front of them, than to see people they are familiar with that are essentially powerless due to class oppression.

In the past few weeks I have worked on trying new ways of filming such as from a vehicle and on bicycle. Both of these, for various reasons, proved to be difficult. Co-

op Radio is a good location, but it is hard because it is in an area that many privileged club-goers walk by, thus possibly making Police more hesitant to be extremely rough. However, good footage has been shot from there, proving it to be the best location that we found.

At this point, very late in the project, I have not personally shot or been present when others have shot any of the footage that we have deemed broadcast worthy. This is frustrating, but I realize that it is all about being at the right pace at the right time. Unfortunately, they don't call ahead and tell you when they are going to be violent (and by this I do not mean only physically.) However, I know that this is not my fault, as I have worked hard on this. I am proud that I am part of a group that was, in my opinion, successful. While the footage is not necessarily earth-shattering, it is evidence that all is not well with Officer Friendly. The project has taught me a lot about documentary film making, an aspect of my passion that I had not extensively explored. While I don't feel it is my life calling, I am very glad I had an opportunity to learn about it and would embrace the chance to work on another documentary if the right project revealed itself.

Working on this project has also indirectly taught me a lot about life, as, almost entirely due to this project, I have lived in Vancouver since July. Living autonomously from my Mom, and the suburbs, has taught me a lot, as I have had to entirely support myself. I am very glad that I did that, and continue to do so. This project was also made more relevant to my life because of this, as this was happening in my neighborhood, not just the city that I work in.

Thank you for letting me be a part of this project, as it has had some very positive impacts on my life. I would like the chance to work with you and Headlines again.

Adam Harrison

Working as a Mentor in Clear Lens gave me the opportunity to know Vancouver from a very different angle, by first hand I witnessed how vulnerable you can be under conditions like your economic status, age, race, place or neighborhood you live (or you can afford).

I thought we would be able to bring attention to the issues after showing real examples of injustice to our city, but I found this is part of a whole system where civil rights are allowed for some people and denied for others based on racism, money or moral criteria, not our constitution. I think the police Dept. reflects the secret desires of an impotent and media-manipulated society. Vancouver is in the face of social changes, increasing non-Caucasian immigration (I was told by a hotel employee where we used to film: "I don't fucking feel in my country anymore") the failure of policy toward drug traffic and rehabilitation, the amount of street kids rejecting being part of the Canadian Pyramid, sleeping in the parks or corners exposing a first world country to be compared to others less fortunate. A society who is afraid of changes and wants to keep their machinery intact beating up "shit disturbers" will not only give consent to the police ("As far as they don't touch us"), they also will empower them to do all what is needed it to get rid of the pain. But they don't realize that they are opening a dangerous door where sooner or later they will also be affected by this subtle permission, anything from a strike or an

antiglobalization rally will have the potential. Defending others' rights is defending yours too.

I also realized that Clear Lens was innovative in its field. Nobody before followed in hiding the Police activity during 5 months, and I have not heard of youth having been empowered this way before. I think the merit of the project was in two levels:

1. It showed that there are not institutions above the citizens and
2. The rumors of police violence brought up by the play "Squeegee" were not myths but a scary and daily reality.

Thanks Headlines
Thanks Dept of Justice
Thanks Donner Canadian Foundation

Rocco Trigueros -- January 22, 2001

Through a Clear Lens has been completed for almost 2 months. What I (David Diamond, Headlines' Artistic and Managing Director) am left with regarding the public response to the project is sad outrage.

Both national television stations (CBC and CTV) viewed the footage and both declined any coverage. The stated reasons were "the election" and "not enough time". The unstated reason, apparent to me, is that they thought the footage was soft. Not sensational enough to warrant serious scrutiny. This is the sadness and sickness of the issue. Six male officers stripping a young woman from the waist up in public view does not warrant public comment. Neither does smashing a young man's head (a young man who is obviously offering no resistance to the officer) against a pole, throwing him to the ground, illegally searching him (no arrest) and then letting him go with no apology, no acknowledgment that a wrong has been done. What could they have possibly done to justify this illegal treatment?

And the public and private sectors wonder why relationships between youth and the police continue to deteriorate. If we managed to get these items onto tape out in the street, what is happening under bridges? in cars? down back alleys? at the outskirts of town? behind closed doors? out of view?

Through a Clear Lens is a window in to a chronic problem in Canada -- one that no one wants to talk about.

History of the Project

I became aware during the creation and rehearsal process of Squeegee that we were and are experiencing a severe problem in the Lower Mainland regarding the interface between police and youth, especially street youth and youth of colour. Some of this, in particular instances of police brutality, was presented in the play. I had also, after the play, witnessed incidents myself, and talked with many people who had experienced and witnessed racist and unprovoked attacks by the police.

Headlines' first attempt at dealing with this issue was to personally invite the Mayor and Vancouver City Council to see Squeegee. None attended. We generated a lawyer's report based on the audience participation in the play. It was submitted to the Mayor and Vancouver City Council by the City's (then) Child and Youth Advocate, Adrienne Montanni. The Mayor and the City Councilors took no action on the report and, to my knowledge, none of them read it. The seven page report is available on our web site (www.headlinestheatre.com) in the "past work/Squeegee" section.

The City's response was surprising to me as Headlines' work is well known and respected in Vancouver. I am the recipient of the City of Vancouver's first Cultural Harmony Award. The Mayor has planted two trees in my name. I thought this might have some currency. It did not.

Mirjana Galovich, Headlines' Communications and Marketing Director at the time, and I attended a community meeting with the police organized by the South Vancouver Resident's Association. . The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues of police brutality. Instead, we and about 15 other people were confronted with a representative of the police (Inspector Dave Jones) who emphatically denied that unprovoked attacks or even racist slurs ever occur. He in fact stated in a roomful of people that 'in his 25 years in the Vancouver Police Force there had never been an incidence of racism from the Vancouver Police.' How does one enter into a conversation about brutality issues in this environment?

People, and youth in particular, who are attacked by the police do not report it to the police. Why would they?

In June, 1999, shortly after Squeegee ended, I attended a Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference in New York. There, I attended a workshop on police brutality issues. The stories told in that room, by activists from across North America, were the same stories I had become familiar with in Vancouver. During the meeting I thought: The Police do shows like "COPS".....why shouldn't we use the same medium to tell the other side of the story?

Shortly after returning from New York I became aware of a Police-driven video project called Through a Blue Lens. A group of Vancouver police, called "The Odd Squad" had, against seemingly insurmountable internal odds, managed to work with a film director to create a documentary about drug use in Vancouver's' Downtown Eastside. The Odd Squad deserve all the credit and positive response that they have received for their efforts -- I truly believe that they made this film for good reasons. I however, along with numerous other people, have concerns about the product. I feel it was exploitive of drug users, in particular one woman who the Squad seemed to pluck off the streets, buying her a dress, make-up, hair-do, etc., having her front for the project on numerous occasions. She is now, from what I understand, back in the street.

I also have concerns about how the police portrayed themselves in the film as heroes, as saviours, especially with my knowledge regarding the brutal realities of Squeegee. Through a Blue Lens was precisely what the title tells us -- the story from the perspective of the police.

I, Headlines' Staff and Board of Directors, decided to try to tell another side of the story, hence: Through a Clear Lens. I know that there are many good police officers out there. Through a Clear Lens is not an attempt to stigmatize the police. All it takes, though, is three, four or five "bad cops" to terrorize a community. Maybe I am perpetually naive, but I believe that if the public is really aware of what is going on, public servant behaviour that has become "acceptable" will no longer be acceptable.

Finding the \$\$\$

During all of the above, I was also flying back and forth to Ottawa at the invitation of the Federal Department of Justice (Youth Policy Justice Unit) to participate in conversations about the new Young Offenders' Act. These were very interesting meetings for me. During one of the sessions I decided to bring the idea for the video project (which up until this point was just a vague idea) forward and see what people thought about it. Much to my surprise Catherine Latimer, Senior Counsel and Director of the Unit said she thought this was a very interesting idea! At a break I went to her and suggested that if she was really interested, I would pull together a proposal and send it to her. She agreed. Catherine and her staff were amazing through this process, and we were granted \$10,300.

After this application went into process, I was also contacted by a representative of the Donner Canadian Foundation. A "miracle call". After a series of conversations we agreed that I would submit an application for \$5,000 for Clear Lens to them, and it was successful.

The plan

With this relatively small sum of money we proceeded to bring together a small group of youth who had experience with video and/or the street. The Production Crew (PC), as they are now called, were found via Rocco Trigueros, Director of Mictlan Theatre (part of Headlines) and Marcus Youseff (actor, director, playwright and teacher at GIFTS, a film school on Galiano Island that works with street-involved Youth.) Rocco and Marcus were going to be the adult mentors on the project. Marcus' new play went into production, though, and he had to pull out very early on and was replaced by Scott Hastings, also a teacher at GIFTS.

The Crew: Adam Harrison, Ariel Smith, Eva Urrutia, Gabrielle Martin, Venus Soberanes. Their "mission" was to gather six to ten 60 - 90 second "spots" that looked at examples of good and bad policing.

The role of the Mentors was to help provide stability in what could be intense circumstances. They would not be there to dictate content, but rather to function as a resource in the moment.

We also tried to provide the youth with editing equipment. This proved to me more complicated than we imagined (see below). Julius Fisher, who has a show on Rogers Community TV called, "Working TV" agreed to air the material, which would also be available on our web site and the Dept. of Justice web site, to provide broader access to the material.

My hope for the crew is that each of them will direct 2 segments, edit 2 segments and do camera and sound on 2 segments. In this way these young videographers will gain invaluable experience in documentary film making that they can take with them on their respective journeys.

The raw material will remain the property of Headlines Theatre, and we will retain all rights to the material. The participants, the Department of Justice, Rogers Community TV and the Vancouver Police will have access to copies of the material if any of the parties so wish.

All personnel will be paid. We have enough money to allocate \$53.00 for each of them, each time they go out, up to a limit of 30 outings. \$1,590 x 6 people is \$9,540 out of \$15,300 in funding. The rest is allocated to workshop costs, equipment, travel, potential lawyers fees.....Payments will start when the shooting sessions start.

Hoped for results

- The promotion of justice for Canadian Youth. By building public awareness of these issues, we hope to reinforce good Police policies and also to make what has become "acceptable" here in Vancouver, and in other parts of Canada, unacceptable.

- Through my own work in the theatre I know about the deeply empowering nature of young people being able to participate in creative action that concretely works towards solving problems in their lives. This empowerment makes other positive choices in their lives possible.

The Workshops

May 15, 2000

Had a great session with the group and Nettie Wild tonight. Nettie and I founded Headlines together almost 20 years ago. She is now an internationally renowned documentary film maker. She talked with the group about shooting in "war zones" and about working as a team. Out of this session with her came the understanding that each member of the PC will need to scout out locations, just like when shooting a drama. Where are places that cameras can be unobtrusive? Are there buildings we can inhabit? Other members of the community who can assist us?

The PC all bring their own knowledge of the issues to this project. They come from various ethnic origins and parts of the Lower Mainland. They all have a passionate desire to do something about the Police brutality issue. They all have their own places where they know these events unfold. Nettie encouraged them to choose to shoot in places they know well.

The PC had great questions for her and were very excited with her involvement. She was very impressed with them and has offered to help in any way she can.

May 16, 2000

We had found a criminal lawyer through an agency in town. He seemed great over the phone and was very enthusiastic about the project and eager to help. He showed up for the workshop, which was to talk about what is legal and what is not, drunk. In retrospect, of course I should have just told him to leave, but in the moment I didn't know what to do with him -- I was so taken aback.

We all tried to make our way through the evening, but all too often the information or advice he was coming up with was so way out there.....he insisted that the best thing for the PC to do would be to get arrested and he would step in and defend them!.....I kept on jumping in and disagreeing, some of the group members did the same.....a number of times he made reference to his own alcoholism, including how he had gotten out of a drunk driving charge.....!!.....

After about 60 minutes of this, I had had enough and wound the evening up and asked the group to stay to "talk about scheduling". After he left I apologized to them. The evening had been a huge surprise for me (and for them). We agreed to chalk it up to experience and look for another lawyer. Eva knew someone who was involved in these issues and she got him to call me the next day. His name is Aymen Nader . We really hit it off on the phone and he is very knowledgeable -- one of the lawyers for the anti-APEC group. He has agreed to come and do another workshop with us.

I sent the drunk lawyer e-mail voicing my and the group's disapproval about his conduct. He called a couple of hours later and, to his credit, agreed, saying he was way out of line, felt badly, and would not charge us a fee.

May 17, 2000

The group met to play with equipment for the first time tonight. We have two cameras, a digital Sony ELURA that fits in the palm of the hand, and an analog Sony ES6500. The ELURA will move close in, the larger 6500 will hang back. The sound equipment hasn't arrived yet (tomorrow, I hope!). We have agreed on a radio lapel mike that a person can wear in their hair. It is multi-directional, and is going to take some playing with to understand how to use it effectively.

I didn't stick around for this equipment session, having put in a series of 12 hour days. Reports back are that they were very happy with the cameras and had a great time learning how to use them. the "trick" of course, is going to be getting the shots, staying inconspicuous and keeping the camera steady. The stronger zoom they use the harder this is going to be.

May 18, 2000

A terrific night with Aymen. This turned into a strategy session. Here's what we came to:

First of all we are doing nothing illegal. It is perfectly legal to film in the street, legal to film uniformed Police, and legal to not tell them beforehand. We need to have the confidence that we are not breaking any law.

With a crew of 4 and one mentor at all times, there will be two camera people, one sound person, a mentor, and one director, at each shoot. It is most likely that if anyone is going to get discovered, it will be whoever has the ELURA, as they will be the closest in to the action.

What do they do if they are being approached by the police? They tell the truth. Politely, and with confidence. "We are a professional film crew, officer, and we are shooting a documentary." As soon as a confrontation with the police starts, the larger camera, if not already visible, becomes visible, so the Police know that not only is what they were doing on film, what they are doing now is being filmed.

We agreed that if the crew gets "hot footage", they need to change film immediately and hand it off to one of the crew who can disappear with it right then. Also, each time they go out to shoot, they will process an envelope, mailed to Headlines, so that if necessary, they can drop the film in a post box while on the run. It is most important that they keep themselves safe. Another ritual before going out to shoot will be to call the lawyer and let him know that they are out, putting him "on alert".

A good question to ask the Police is if they are under arrest, and if not, say clearly that they would like to walk away. They are not obliged to submit to a search, give anything other than their name and address, or to hand over the equipment unless they are first placed under arrest.

In the event that any of them are arrested, the first call they make is to the lawyer. The lawyer will then call an emergency pager number that either I will have, or one of Headlines' Board members will have if I am out of town. Both parties will get immediately to wherever the Crew member(s) are, and deal with the situation.

Hoping that it never gets this far, I have also provided each PC member with the following letter:

To Whom It May Concern

May 17, 2000

The bearer of this letter, _____ is working on a research and public education video project for Headlines Theatre that investigates the interface between youth and the police.

This project is happening with the full knowledge of and funding from the Federal Department of Justice. The BC Child and Youth Advocate is also aware of the project and its activities. The project duration is until October 31/00.

For further discussion of these matters, do not hesitate to call me, day or night at: 871-0508 (w) _____(h).

Sincerely,

David Diamond
Artistic and Managing Director
Headlines Theatre

Because Aymen will not be in Vancouver every day between now and the end of October, he has pulled in an associate of his, Michael Smith, who will be the back-up lawyer. Michael and Aymen are providing me with their schedule, which the PC will refer to each day/night they shoot, so they know who the "on call" lawyer is.

Whenever possible the PC will get release forms signed by non-Police subjects in the footage. The release form has been approved by another lawyer who has agreed to act as a consultant on the project. His name is Brahm Martz, and his specialty is film and TV.....I've never done a project that needed three lawyers!

RELEASE FORM

I hereby grant to Theatre for Living Society (Headlines Theatre) and the Society's legal representatives and assigns the unlimited right to portray me, my actions, words and likeness, including the right to edit, modify, interpolate, combine with other materials, add to and/or delete any of the above material for use in the television program production titled: "Through a Clear Lens", which use shall include the right to reproduce, sell, exhibit, broadcast and distribute all or part of the above material in all media, throughout the world in perpetuity.

I expressly release Theatre for Living Society and the Society's legal representatives and assigns from and against any and all claims that I have or may have for invasion of privacy, defamation, copyright or any other cause of action which may arise out of the production, distribution, broadcast or exhibition of Through a Clear Lens.

Name (print) _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____ Area Code _____

If Minor, signature of Parent or Guardian _____

Witness _____

Friday May 19, 2000

We have the sound equipment. The group came to the office at 10AM today, having left at 10PM last night. They went out into the street to play for a few hours, with the sound for the first time, and came back saying they needed more practice. That's not a bad thing. They need to feel confident before they go out to shoot.

I have asked them to start keeping journals, which could be important in two ways: for their own use, and for this report. I am not going to be in the street with them -- all my information is second hand.

May 26, 2000

This was going to be the last workshop day. They came back having found out that the sound equipment isn't doing what we need it to. It is possible that we settled on the wrong equipment configuration. With what we have, the "human mike" is having to get way too close to the action to get good sound. Scott is investigating with our contact at a local sound equipment outlet other options, hoping we can return the sound equipment. It looks like instead of going the lavalier route, we will try the shotgun mike approach.

June 1, 2000

Final rehearsal day today. We should be shooting next Friday.

We are going to return the new sound equipment. It is doing what it is designed to do fine, it just isn't designed to do what we need it to do. It appears our only option is to let go of the idea of getting clear core sound, unless we find a way to plant microphones on the police (not), or invest \$10,000+ on sound equipment (also not). We have to think about it differently.

So, the group agrees, that we will work with a standard mike, and also the built-ins on the cameras, and get the best sound we can. Then, during shooting, the crew will connect with the subject of the shoot if possible and do an interview. This interview could be used as voice over, the film maker could do voice over, etc.

We are going to lose about \$200 in restocking fees on the sound equipment, but can take the \$1,000 left and put it into a standard mike (\$200) and paying for more crew time.

June 19, 2000

We are shooting. Had a report back today from the Mentors regarding the two nights they have been out so far. No usable footage yet. As expected, they are on a steep learning curve. The group is making contacts on the street, as the community is becoming aware of the project. Locations and "peak hours" are being identified, as are particular officers who are problematic and who we will be on the look-out for.

There was an article in the Vancouver Sun today. An officer was charged with (and pled guilty to) assault. He and his partner pulled up to a youth who had made a rude gesture at them with his hand -- and the officer beat the youth so badly he permanently injured his left eye. The assaulting officer got suspended for 3 days without pay -- his partner, who did nothing to stop the beating was not even reprimanded. A reminder of the culture of acceptable violence in the police force that makes this project necessary.

Postscript:

November 1, 2000

there was an article in the National post today. A police officer in Ontario was charged with assaulting someone in police custody. The man was handcuffed at the time of the assault, which involved smashing his head onto a table so hard it broke the table. The officer was suspended for 10 years with pay(!?) During this reprimand time of paid suspension, he went to law school and has now become a lawyer. Am I nuts, or is there something very wrong with this?

Turns out that iMovie, the editing software that came with the iMacDVSE that we are using for editing (not part of the purchase on this project, Headlines bought this as an office computer with other funds) is not sophisticated enough to blur out faces if we need to -- and we will need to. So, I have had to spend almost \$1,000 on editing software. Scott has suggested we purchase EditDV, as he uses it at the school.

July 11, 2000

(the entry excerpted from e-mail from mentor, Rocco Trigueros)

"Ariel decided that she was in a "personal crisis" so she move out of the project. Friday I went with Eva and Venus. We hide for one hour more or less in a place where one of the squeegee kids told us, police bring them to hit them, under a bridge, close to the beach. And we saw activity of other criminal nature but the police didn't show up. We went to Main and Hastings and saw many police cars outside a bar, so put our cameras to work, and 9 police were just wasting their time chatting, meanwhile another took one of the customers with patience and care to an ambulance!!!!. The rest were very happy, then we went to follow 2 of them for an hour, and did not make nothing wrong when they detain people. The paradoxical thing of the night is that Venus when she was walking to Headlines witnessed 3 Latinos being stopped by an undercover cop and being put under brutal circumstances of inspection... she ran for the camera but could not arrive back on time.

I think, David that they know who we are, and what are we doing. In the shooting you can see clearly the way they look at us and smile, for many minutes.....Eva and Venus did an excellent job, clear Images , and in a very courageous and relaxed way (just in front of the police).

The next night we went to Broadway and Fraser where we heard about possibilities, this night was gray and with no achievements, very frustrating, and we felt sad and impotent and unlucky. That will change next Monday when I suggested we go to Co-op-Radio and put an eye on police rounds from 10:00 am to 2:00 am., thanks to the access of my sister to her radio show that runs during those hours. Gabe immediately made a map of the positions of the windows and I met the most important contact for this project so far.... A Latin social worker who works at DEYAS and S.O.S and helped Vancouver Television to do a documentary of the underworld of East Van. He is somebody who I had worked with before with excellent results and integrity, so I trusted him about the project, and he has such excellent relation with the people in the street, that he knew: days, Police names (El Pelon, el Cubano, and other nick names of brutal police). He told me the "Judge " was out of town, so that means that police is relaxed in these days, also he told me when the Judge is coming back, he knows by first hand all the movements. He suggested to me a calendar that year by year the police follows (like they have orders to clear out streets one week before the fireworks, so we have to work all that week) and his PEOPLE HAVE A SCHEDULE of when the worst attacks have been. I have a meeting with him this Thursday at 5:00 PM, and we will talk about all.

Now, there is an excellent location, the Balmoral Hotel, which is 45 dollars for two every night where we can get an incredible view of the most important focus in the city (Main and Hastings), and the Crew say they can spend all night shifting turns, without being followed and threatened by drug dealers as has already happened, I am concerned about the safety of these kids, in dangerous waters. The other buildings are only for monthly rent \$345 by month, so the Hotel could be a nice choice.

Scott is coming this Thursday to give a new editing workshop from 7- 10 PM. I asked everybody to come."

July 24, 2000

The Hotel has been a good decision. I haven't been able to see it yet, but from what I understand, the group got footage a few nights ago. I have been trying to connect with Rocco, leaving messages, but we keep missing each other.

I also had a 90 minute talk with Terry Milewski from CBC TV. We are bringing him in early, with an exclusive "inside view" on the project. He thinks it is a very innovative idea and is willing to run with it, thinking that if we can get footage it will be a major national story. He already knows, from his other work, that there is a serious police problem in Vancouver and across the country.

August 6, 2000

Well, we think our phones are tapped. Lots of misdirected calls, clicking, call returns, and people telling me they are having trouble getting through. I had a series of conversations with the security people at Telus (phone company) and, after checking the line, and finding "an anomaly" on it, they sent a technician down here

to run more tests.....and then they started telling me there was no way to tell anything. Call me paranoid.

Rocco has also been telling me that police cars have been parked very often in the last couple of weeks outside his house, and that a man, who his family believes was an undercover cop, came into their store and started asking questions about Rocco. We are not intimidated -- knowing that we are not doing anything illegal. It is just another example of why what we are doing is important.

We are starting to see that the police are watching us watching them. One of the crew was shooting an 'event' through a window and one of the officers saw her. He started yelling at her to "keep shooting". Once she calmed down, she did. I don't have time to see all of the raw footage, as I am in pre-production on a mainstage play, but the group is telling me that the police are very aware of the group and the individuals in it.

Getting material is proving to be very difficult. Of course we are in this strange situation. While we are also on the look-out for examples of good policing, we want to capture the "Rodney King footage". And its not that these kinds of things aren't happening -- we believe they are, getting them on tape is very challenging. The RK footage was captured because the LA Police got sloppy, and attacked someone in the street, in front of high rise buildings....I imagine someone walked to a window and grabbed a camera. The person who got the footage stumbled upon it...was not out looking for it. Very different scenario with this project.

In the midst of this frustration it is important to remember there are other reasons we are doing Through a Clear Lens. Yes, we want to expose police brutality, but we also want to empower the film makers, have them learn lots about shooting and responsibility and be able to use the experience to further their careers and better their lives. I got together with the group to remind them of this, and I think it was a good thing to do -- taking the pressure off a bit, putting the project back into a realistic perspective.

August 7, 2000

Word that Venus got footage. The police have an Asian Youth and rough him up against a pole, get him on the ground, empty all his pockets, (an illegal search without arrest) leave him there for a long time.....and then let him go. No apology, nothing.

She also has an example of good policing: A woman is in distress at a bus stop. She is in physical pain. An officer on a bicycle comes to her aid. A man from the neighborhood comes with a first aid kit and increases her distress. The officer calls an ambulance and stays with her throughout, until the medics take her away.

September 5, 2000

One of the mentors (Scott) and I have agreed that he should leave the project. He was initially supposed to be available for the summer, and he and Rocco were going to share mentor duties. Then he accepted a job on Galiano Island, and all of a

sudden was available for only about one-third of the time, and even this is proving to be difficult to schedule. It doesn't make any sense to continue this way. We'll use the money to extend other people's hours.

Terry Milewski from CBC TV is going out with the group this Friday night. He is preparing a major story on the project. This is very exciting, of course.

We've run into editing problems. Now that Venus has footage (and also has to leave to go visit her grandfather who she thinks is dying) we need to start to edit. For some reason, although we can access the software, the camera won't show up on the desktop. This was working before. This is the only program Headlines has that I know nothing about ... we bought it for Scott who is not here in Vancouver anymore! Rocco is looking for someone else who has experience with Edit DV, for help.

September 11, 2000

The group had a great time, evidently, with Terry Milewski. Rocco was very impressed with the people in the group and their candidness with the TV crew. I see this as another layer in their experience in the project....this will be major coverage for them and the experience of dealing with CBC TV is important.

Eva also got footage. It is pretty extreme. About 6 male police officers are surrounding a young woman. They have her on the ground and are searching her. They pull her shirt off, in the street, in front of bystanders. Then, a female officer arrives, who COULD have done any necessary search. The woman officer takes the young woman away.

October 4, 2000

Its been a while since I was able to make an entry -- tied up in other projects. I solved the editing problem here -- it had to do with an extension conflict with the new version of Quicktime. Rocco and Adam came in with me one night last week to get the edit done on two items. The workshop that Scott did with Rocco and Adam, though, was not extensive enough. They don't know their way around the software enough to do the editing with the necessary complexity. Edit DV is really not intuitive. The purchase should have been of Final Cut Pro. Too late. Extremely frustrating.

Rocco has pulled in another friend of his _____ who will help with editing, but on another system, so that we can edit the first two items. He will "press the buttons" while the director works through the edit. This is great. A friend of Eva's, in the meantime, is coming in here to try to figure out the complexities of Edit DV.

Arrangements are being made with our web designers to start uploading material, getting it ready for when we launch. We will be including links to the Mayor of Vancouver, who is the chair of the Police Board, in case people want to comment on the activities of the police.

November 13, 2000

A lot has happened. I am in rehearsals now for Corporate U, our mainstage production this year, Clear Lens is behind, but imminent now. The editing mentor turned into an editor, which was not the agreement. It got to the point where I finally heard about it -- (I can't be there) -- Rocco and Gabrielle and the editor were together to edit Gabe's item. After laying down her narration track, he announced that the three of them couldn't be in the editing room together and someone had to go. She left. When I heard this I hit the roof. The concept of the film makers having the experience of all aspects of the project (location scouting, scheduling, shooting, editing, etc.) seems straightforward enough. Anyway, I sent the material back for re-editing and insisted that she be present this time. The schedules didn't work, so Rocco and the editor re-edited without her! I sent it back again -- this time, because she couldn't commit the full time, she and Rocco did a paper edit together and then Rocco went in and followed her paper directions.

So, all the material is edited. I did a final viewing and feel that in some of the items the "civilians" (non-Police) are way too recognizable. We are in disagreement over how important this is and also what "recognizable" is, but bottom line, it is me who needs to take responsibility for protecting the Society from lawsuits and, unlike a big news agency, we do not have two floors of lawyers on call. So, before any dubs are made from the master, the fuzzing out of faces has to be complete.

I have asked a local film maker I know (who is involved in Corporate U) to do this bit of post-production. We looked at footage together and he agreed that the faces were too recognizable for our legal position. I gave him the DV tape marked "Clear lens master" yesterday. This morning, on the phone, we realized this is not the master. It turns out there is another tape in the box that has been marked "Final master"..... and around and around we go....

Deadline is tomorrow for completion. At that point copies will be sent to Julius at Rogers, CBC TV, our web people (who are going to create the quicktime files, upload, burn a CD and also transfer to a zip disk), and then copies will go to the funders.

Once CBC has footage, we will be informed of a news broadcast date (sometime next week). The day of the broadcast our press releases will go out and the site will become accessible and links active. Broadcast on Working TV will be days later on November 24th and 27th. Then, we'll see what else happens.

November 22, 2000

Terry Milewski tried to get us onto the National News for last night, and from what I understand it came close -- but the news was 10 minutes too long and items had to be cut - -and one of them was "Clear Lens". No chance now until after the election, which is the 27th.

Faxes started going out today, though, and the Regional office of CBC called and might do a news item tomorrow. We have sent them to Terry to get the footage he has.....we'll see.

November 26, 2000

No CBC coverage yet, national or regional. CTV had a look at the footage and didn't air it. Here's what I think: They see it as being too soft. In an age where violence is sensationalized to the extent that it is, where hundreds of people are shot in fact and fiction on TV every day, this footage seems ho-hum. In order for it to be "news" it has to be sensational. We live in a culture where, if one bothers to, one can go out and shoot the Police stripping a young woman from the waist up in public, smashing a young man's head against a pole -- these things are there daily if you can catch them -- and its not newsworthy. Unless, maybe, it was happening to middle/upper class people in wealthier neighbourhoods, and not people in the downtown east side. Somehow this is the real story that is emerging from "Through a Clear Lens."

December 27, 2000

Once our notices went out there were 607 hits on web site -- this must be people viewing the clips. Because there was no coverage, we set up a special screening on the opening night of Corporate U, our mainstage project this year. After the play was over and before the audience got out of their seats, I explained about Through a Clear Lens and introduced the group (all of them came except Gabe, who was out of town). We showed the four clips and it was wonderful to be able to give the group some public recognition.

Its difficult to know what is going to happen from this project. Fred Bass, a Vancouver City Councilor was at Corporate U and approached one of Headlines' Board Members, wanting to organize a special screening of the tapes for the Mayor and City Council. This would be a great thing.

I will keep trying to get coverage for the project. It will not "go stale". We will also keep the clips available on our site for the next few months at least, and have a CD, which means we can send the clips (as quicktime files) to anyone who wants them.