

Tough guises, a documentary film essay

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SUMMARY Tough guises, a documentary film of 1999, feature Jackson Katz, who clearly and systematically addresses social construction of male identities in the United States as perpetuated by the media. Masculinity identity of men is expansively addressed in this film (covers close to three quarters of the documentary) and the media's contribution to its sustainability in the society. Jackson Katz in this documentary brings out masculinity as a pose or a mask men put up to sculpture their idea of real men as been powerful, in control, intimidating, independent, overruling, stud and tough. In contrary they that do not portray such a pose have a high price to pay for not qualifying as real men, they are seen as cowards or 'mama's (mothers) boy'. The film also captures cultural developments in a scope of more than 30 years ago that are seen to be responsible for the current gender-based forms of violence such as rape, shootings in school and domestic violence as perpetuated by the media and society. Violent masculinity is clearly illustrated using statistics that show the male gender commit most of the crimes. More than 90% of; murder cases, dating violence, assaults, domestic violence and child sexual abuses are committed by men.

However efforts to curb this seem to be ineffectual as long as the media holds its position. Instances have been captured in this documentary of how the media focuses on the subordinate groups rather than the dominant groups when it comes to cases of violation against the female gender. The way the media packages the information to the public raises more questions than solution to the problems; use of passive language when talking about violence against women, for example " A woman was raped.....," rather

than “ A man raped a woman....” Violent masculinity is further illustrated by the remarkable change in the bodily imaging of men’s masculinity in the last 50 years as compared to that of women. It is fashionable and socially acceptable for a man to appear big bodied (masculine), tough and strong while it is fashionable and acceptable for a woman to look slender, small and dependent. Backlash is also tackled in this documentary, it refers to “....

angry often violent reaction by a group threatened by progressive changes in the culture due to perceived threats in the tradition or culture about masculinity”, (Katz, 1999). Backlash explains aspects of violent masculinity, especially as seen by men rallying against feminism; feminism is about equal rights, justice and fairness among men and women. Jackson Katz, also talk about the invisibility of masculinity, where crimes committed by men or boys do not warrant a national outcry as would crimes committed by girls or women, he gives comprehensible paradigms of this in the video. Making masculinity visible is the first step to address women issues in the culture; for masculinity is not innate rather, it is made and perpetuated through media and society. Jackson Katz, wraps up the documentary by briefly discussing how the situation of men masculinity can be improved.

EVALUATIONThe documentary film tough guise clearly brings out the pervasiveness’ of the media in informing our perception of cultural construction like masculinity today. It is extensively and comprehensively done as it covers a scope of close to 50 years citing instances, events and activity illustrating remarkable influence in the perception of masculinity, and how their effects have tricked down to the present. I agree with Katz in this documentary that masculinity has been invisible for the longest time.

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Men crimes against the society do not warrant out cry as do women crimes. The use of passive language by the media when referring to violent against women has furthered extreme masculinity in the society. Lack of readiness to embrace progressive cultural change and reacting with violence culminate the challenges that men in disguise of tough guise are facing. However, I am of the opinion that engaging men in a more friendly way rather than condemning, while addressing issues facing women is one of the way forward towards achieving equity and equality of men and women. This would be important in helping men to appreciate the woman as a person and the critical role she plays in the family and the society at large, without feeling threatened hence not warranting any form of backlash. Forcing change through men throats will not be an easier task or a one day activity, since chauvinism and masculinity has a wide historical background from which it is coming from and it is further been perpetuated by the media and families through roles and values constructed in the boy child right from childhood. It is also very clear from the documentary, just as the media has been used to perpetuate negative aspects of masculinity it therefore means that it is also a powerful tool of communicating healthy and constructive messages to the same society. ReferencesKatz, J.

, (1999). Tough Guise. Retrieved May 28, 2010 from http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=211&template=PDGCommTemplates/HTN/Item_Preview.html