Christine White

Dr. Tilton

Media, Culture, & Identity

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Videographic Reflection: Stand Up/Stand N Rock

For my videographic criticism, I decided to analyze Taboo’s Stand Up/Stand N Rock music video. When attending the One Book, One Richmond presentation, I connected with the idea that people shift from issue to issue, forgetting about the one previous and redirecting all of their attention to what’s new. They described a timeline of events, showing how political issues are easily forgotten as time goes on. One of the issues that particularly resonated with me was the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Last year, I took a Native American Literature class where I was first introduced to the video. Not only did we watch and discuss the stylistic choices of it over one class period, but we also revisited the pipeline issue throughout the semester, monitoring progress and resistance towards it. Because of this, I found myself extremely invested in it. However, since that class, I haven’t thought about the pipeline. I found myself guilty of exactly what the speaker was talking about. After the presentation, I was inspired to revisit the issue and watch the video again. After noticing that the number of views on this video was disproportionate to the amount of views Taboo typically gets, I wanted to examine what power celebrities have when it comes to real issues. In my piece, I not only argued that celebrities power to influence is limited when it comes to political activism but also that resistance to issues fades over time. I used evidence from the Stand Up/Stand N Rock video itself, along with another Black-Eyed Pea’s video.

The first keyword I talked about was power. In *Keywords for Media Studi*e*s*, power is divided into two categories; power to and power over. As a member of the Black-Eyed Peas, Taboo seemingly has a lot of followers and power to influence. However, when it comes to real political issues, how much power over people does he actually have? Being a part of the Shoshone tribe, Taboo used his platform to tell the public to “stand up” to companies harming the environment and encroaching upon Indigenous territory. Another celebrity included in the video is Shailene Woodley. As a movie star featured in many popular films, she has a lot of power to influence people to support the cause. But, even with two celebrity cameos, the video still has only a million views. Although that is certainly a significant number of views, there is a major disparity when comparing it to the amount of views some of Taboo’s other music videos get. This shows that when it comes to real political issues, celebrities’ power over people is limited.

The next keyword I included was Representation. *Keyword for Media Studies* defines representation as a depiction of reality. Because many media platforms are supposed to present an accurate representation of real life, deciding who should be featured in videos can often become a sticky situation. On hand, it’s important to make sure all types of groups are being represented. On the other hand, it is also crucial to ensure groups aren’t being misrepresented. In the Stand Up/Stand N Rock music video, the video mostly includes Native Americans. However, Shailene Woodley is also featured. Because Woodley isn’t of indigenous background, there are questions of whether or not she should be included. While she is supportive of the environment and has the power to influence others, some argue that her participation in the video has more to do with publicity than passion. Often times when interpreting media, questions about what groups aren’t being represented arise. However, it is interesting to look at it from the opposite perspective and ask questions about what groups are being represented.

The final keyword I choose to include was Resistance. In *Keywords for Media Studies*, resistance is defined as opposition from one body to another. At its core, this video encompasses resistance. Not only is there footage of actual protesting, but the publication of the video is a form of political demonstration within itself. Since the video was published in 2016, resistance towards the pipeline has dwindled. As news outlets have broadcasted more stories and new issues have arisen, the public has shifted their attention and efforts to stop the pipeline have exponentially decreased. As time goes on, I believe one’s beliefs and efforts to fight for something should grow stronger. Unfortunately, that is not the case here, as resistance has faded over time.

Another keyword I considered using was Race. Although I could’ve included it because the pipeline issue deals with an issue facing a specific group of people, I decided the keywords I used better suited my argument. Even though political issues often have to do with race, I didn’t want to limit my message to just one group.

Making decisions on what media to use and how to weave my argument through those pieces of media was actually an interesting process. Proving an argument about media through media is nothing like I’ve done before. Usually, when trying to prove a point, I find myself telling rather than showing. However, in this videographic criticism, I learned how to use videos and pictures instead of words to share my ideas. When deciding what pieces of media to include, I knew I wanted to mainly focus on the actual Stand Up/Stand N Rock music video itself. Because it only has a little over one million views, I assumed most people hadn’t seen it before. I wanted to make sure my criticism not only provided an in-depth analysis of the video’s significance but also allowed the audience to feel like they were able to see the original video. In order to achieve this, I decided to keep the song playing throughout while including other media, like the Boom Boom Pow music video and photos of Shailene Woodley. However, because the song was only a certain amount of time, I faced a trade-off between making sure the audience was able to keep up and including as much content as possible. In the end, I decided to use less text and let my media speak for itself in order to ensure the audience had enough time to read the text that was included.

While making this video, my perspective on media, culture, and identity has definitely widened. Through the Stand Up/Stand N Rock video itself, I saw that culture is not always dependent on race and similar backgrounds. Although Shailene Woodley may not have grown up in a similar community or have the same values as some of the indigenous people in the video, they embodied a common culture when coming together to support the same cause. This video is not only an example of media but was circulated through the media platform, YouTube. Before doing this criticism, I hadn’t focused on the number of views videos get. However, this has caused me to think differently how the public reacts to certain topics and what that says about what we value as a society. Finally, making this video has allowed me to think about my own identity. Before going to the One Book, One Richmond event, I had forgotten about a cause I once cared deeply about. After doing research on the pipeline and going through the process of putting media together, I realized that this is something that I will continue to monitor and revisit even after this class is over.

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