

Born Into Brothels

Born into Brothels is a well-presented documentary that brings you into the red light district of Calcuta, India. The red light district is a place in which prostitution is not a choice but a settled way of life, in which mothers and even grandmothers find a way of surviving for their basic needs, by prostitution. This film consciously brings you into the lives of the children who were born in this life style.

Photojournalist Zana Briski, who lived in India for several years, decided to embark on a journey; Zana tried to portray their way of survival. She found several barriers, the women from the red light district did not like the idea of being “found out” as sex workers, instead she noticed the children are intrigued by the camera so she started giving cameras to 8 children, ages from 10 to 14, so they could take pictures of their surroundings.

The predominant sociological concepts from this film are the different norms and values in which this society lives. One of the examples is how the women have their own roles. They know that by a certain age, they must become prostitutes as a way of survival, carrying this role from generation to generation.

The ascribed status for most of these people must be difficult to change. The internal factors in their everyday life are hard to overcome due to predominant poverty in which they find themselves.

As I watched the film, I could see how the children were magnificent, playful and full of life, however the norms that children go by are extremely intense, no education seems to be supported by their relatives. I could observe the socialization and behaviors they all have

as a common identity with shared expectations, which in most cases their ascribed status wont be changing to an achieved status.

The human behavior in this case, seems to be pretty much settled to their life style; in this film, the children seemed to be influenced by what the society makes of them.

One of the main points that bothered me, was the oblivious interest in some of the parents, but at the same time I came to understand that they also have grown in the same environment as a way of surviving in which is almost impossible to get out of the system finding their selves trapped for generations.

Poverty, forced labor, drug addiction, prostitution and slavery; brings a crude sense throughout the film in which the only hope is to guide these children by breaking the cycle for which they seemed to be destined.

The children's primary group has a strong impact on them, in such a way many of the children decide to continue with the cycle of survival other than obtaining as education for themselves. The education contrast is very strong, particularly with western cultures, in which individual knowledge becomes a principal objective as a way of survival nowadays.

Despite the efforts of Zana to try to help these children out of their atrocious life, at the end of the film, we see how some of the children that were successfully admitted after so many struggles and obstacles, decided to drop out the boarding school. Some are taken out by their parents while some decided to stay.

"Born into Brothels" (Academy Award winner for Best Documentary), is one of the best documentaries I have ever seen. The story is absolutely moving and extraordinary despite the fact that the life in the red light district will exist for centuries more, my personal sociological insight, is that I could see how the determination of an individual can really make a difference in someone's life by giving the chance for a better future despite cultural barriers.