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PBS Point of View:

Out in the Night Media Unit (100 pts)

Objectives:

- Know the legal definition of “self-defense” in Delaware.
- Understand that stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination influence the way the law is applied.
- See at least three different presentations of the same evidence and consider how each influences the way you think about guilt or innocence.
- Discuss the influence of media reporting on criminal prosecution.
- See an example of real-life consequences of homophobia, racism, and sexism (including the common practice of men “cat-calling” or verbally harassing women on the street).
- Write short, persuasive essays.
- Practice note-taking.

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1. Unit Introduction - What is Self-Defense? (Back to Top)

“Generally, a person may use reasonable force when it appears reasonably necessary to prevent an impending injury. A person using force in self-defense should use only so much force or violence associated with self-defense is considered an acceptable response to aggression. (<http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Self-Defense>)

Respond to the following questions:

1. How is self-defense legally defined for the state of Delaware?

Your Response:

2. What are the specific parameters that govern what can be labeled as self-defense?

Your Response:

3. If a person disrespects you, can you hit him or her, according to Delaware law? Explain why or why not.

Your Response:

4. If you attack a person who has threatened to attack you, is it self-defense, according to Delaware law? Explain why or why not.

Your Response:

5. If someone is attacking your friend and your friend cannot defend himself/herself, is it self-defense if you fight the attacker to defend him/her, according to Delaware law? Explain why or why not.

Your Response:

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II. Introduction to *Out in the Night* [\(Back to Top\)](#)

The documentary, *Out in the Night*, covers a 2006 case of self-defense, in which a group of young women from Newark, New Jersey were charged with assault, gang assault, and attempted murder. As you look as the clips provided from the film, you will evaluate whether the claim of self-defense was justified, how the evidence was presented, and how the presentation influenced your thinking.

In the table below, detail evidence from the clip that identifies facts that were presented, how the filmmakers presented these facts (techniques used to influence how the viewer interprets the evidence), and how the clips made you feel (include references to specific techniques used by journalists, lawyers, and the filmmaker that evoked these emotions). Then, state whether you think this is a case of self-defense based on the clip. For each clip after the first, note if your opinion is strengthened, weakened, or remained the same, with regards to the new information from each clip.

Clips	Facts	Filmmaking	Feelings	Is self-defense justified?
<p><u>Clip 1:</u> This version of events is told by the defendants and also, via trial transcript, by the man involved.</p>				
<p><u>Clip 2:</u> This clip focuses on the way various media sources reported the event.</p>				
<p><u>Clip 3:</u> This version of events consists of video from surveillance cameras with commentary by</p>				

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lawyers and voice-over reading from trial transcripts				
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Short Answer Response: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What were the different ways that the story was presented about this event?
Response:

2. How do the differences in storytelling influence the viewers' perception of the case? How might these variations influence a juror?
Response:

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III. The Trial: An Adversarial Court System [\(Back to Top\)](#)

An adversarial court system is designed to have jurors hear at least two different versions of events. The following two clips from *Out in the Night* demonstrate the adversarial court system and the way that each side depicts the same events differently. As you watch the next two clips, imagine how a juror for this case might view the information.

[Clip 4a](#)

[Clip 4b](#)

Short Answer Response: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. How would you determine which version of events to believe?

Response:

2. What evidence is most convincing, and why?

Response:

3. What did you learn about the ways in which personal beliefs about things like race, economic status, gender and sexual orientation influence interpretations of evidence?

Response:

4. Do you think the case would have been prosecuted or covered differently if the young women were not black or were not lesbians?

Response:

5. Summarize the most important observations you made for each of the following categories.
Facts:

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Filmmaking:

Feelings:

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IV. Summative Assessment: (Back to Top)

Watch Clip 5 from *Out in the Night*, in which the issue is raised of which people are or aren't allowed to defend themselves. Write a five-paragraph persuasive essay arguing either for or against acquittal for the women of the film on the basis of self-defense. Be sure to include the legal definition of self-defense in your essay and illustrate your position with specific evidence from the clips. In light of what you learned about how presentation relates to interpretation, pay attention to the way that you frame the case in your writing. *[Complete your essay on a separate Google Doc, using MLA format. Include your name and the name of the documentary in your file name, and share the document with your English teacher.]*