

Documenting the Undocumented: Performing Counter-Narratives on Citizenship

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Abstract : In a time when murky debates on US immigration policy are polarizing a nation steeped in partisan and nativist politics, certain media texts are proposing to challenge the dominant ways in which immigrant discourses are shaped in political debates. The paper will examine how two media texts perform counter-hegemonic discourses against institutionalized concepts on citizenship. The article looks at Documented (2014), a documentary film, written and directed by Jose Antonio Vargas, a Pulitzer-winning journalist-turned-activist and a self-proclaimed undocumented immigrant; and DefineAmerican.com, an online media platform that articulates the convergence of multiple voices and discourses about post-industrial and post-semiotic citizenship. As sites of meaning production, the two media texts perform counter-narratives that inspire new forms of mediated social activism and postcolonial identities. The paper argues that a closer introspection of the media texts reveals emotional, thematic and ideological claims to an interrogation of a diasporic discourse on redefining the rules of inclusion and exclusion within the postmodern dialogic of citizenship.

Keywords : counter-narratives, documentary filmmaking, postmodern citizenship, diaspora media

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