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The Importance of Media Literacy and Detecting Biases



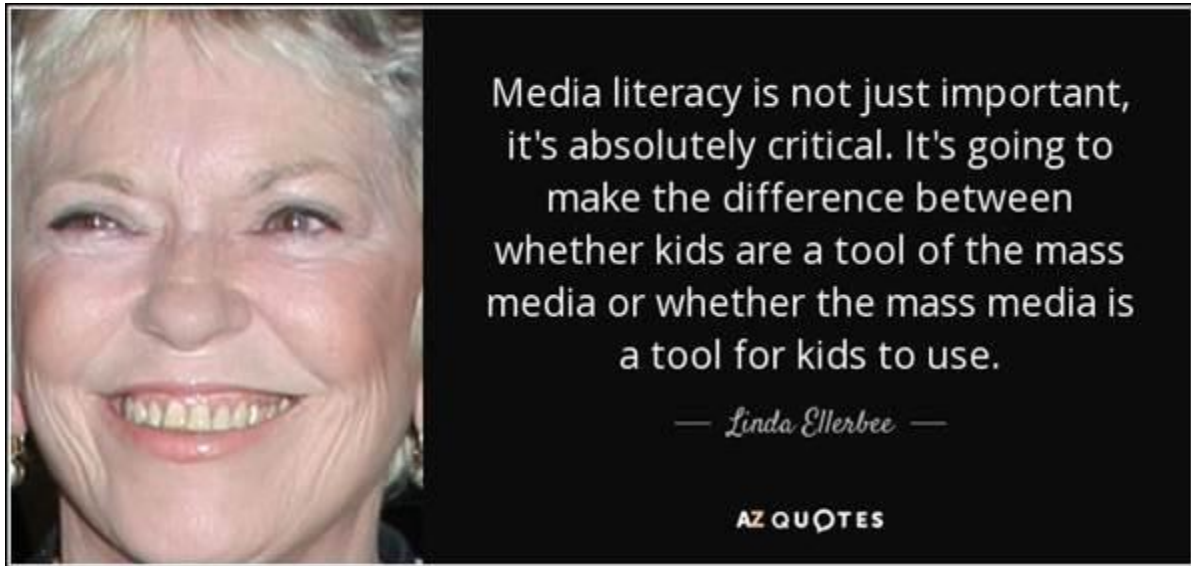
BIAS IN MEDIA: HOW LANGUAGE DICTATES YOUR OPINION

Have you ever felt personally victimized by an idiot who thought they were hot shit? Odds are you have, I know I've been trapped by a confusing conversation or ten. Here's an example. Tenth grade in the Bronx, probably a Tuesday morning, I'm sitting in global history. The teacher is talking about current events and how the world has been through a lot of turmoil following the events of COVID-19. The teacher had asked for our thoughts on how the transition back into the world felt to us. "I would have felt a lot better if the Chinese people didn't bring Covid into our country." The response pierced through everyone's ears, and we all turned toward the corner of the room where it came from. No surprise that it came out of Jeremy's mouth, as he was known for spouting nonsense. His comment sparked a debate about why it was wrong to say that and how it is ultimately not true. He was asked to provide evidence by my classmates, and all he could use as his source was Fox News. Now, I judged him, and I judged him hard. How was it that your source was Fox News, one of the most unreliable and known biased sources to exist in our time? But out of all the credible and unbiased sources out there, why did he have to choose one of the worst options?

Maybe it's because he did not know any better.

I was introduced to the concept of media literacy through my program, Scholars for Educational Opportunity (SEO). The program uplifts kids from the city and aims to teach them different aspects of the world at the cost of kids Saturdays. It's a pretty great program, it's where us youngins learned what it meant to be media literate. Media literacy refers to the ability to access different forms of media, like newspapers, news outlets, images, and critically assess their credibility. For one to be media literate is imperative, so they don't turn out to be like Jeremy. When you fall victim to biased news, you can be misinformed about current events. You want to make sure that you have all the correct information when you speak on a topic so that you feel confident and well-informed enough to discuss it, as if it were a project you had to present.

Quick question: By the tone of my writing are you able to detect the bias I have? If you were able to, then congratulations you just demonstrated media literacy. But if not then you might want to pay close attention to this paper.



Well, what makes Fox News an unreliable source? Simply put, their political bias tends to twist current events to place blame on a certain group or uplift a certain group. A report conducted by the Media Bias/Fact Check organization deemed Fox News to be, "... right biased based on editorial positions that align with the right and Questionable due to the promotion of propaganda, conspiracy theories, pseudoscience, the use of poor sources, and numerous false claims and failed fact checks" (Media Bias/Fact Check). Therefore, people like Jeremy fall to the powerful and necessary trigger words that outlets like Fox News require to amass their followers. They distort information and disguise it as facts. Even the language Fox uses makes the stories they cover seem like they are an "attack on the American people" most of the time. The influence of language on news outlets is undeniably powerful. Today, misinformation spreads like wildfire because of social media. Social media also extends to media literacy because you need to know what's believable or not, and a lot of news on social media is being censored because of lawsuits and the government. This is why identifying bias is important and matters.

According to an article titled, “How to lean against your biases: A conversation with Daniel Kahneman” published by the American Press Institute, it states, “Leaning against biases means drawing people’s attention to facts that they normally would not pay attention to or might not even want to pay attention to although they are facts that are important” (Tran). Hence, not being biased means consciously taking in important facts that we may want to ignore at first because these facts challenge whatever beliefs we hold. But to become truly media literate demands facing the facts that make us feel uncomfortable.

All in all, being trained in the dying art of media literacy is important because you can discern what can be real news or fake news. This is achievable through observing the language used in outlets since the language used spells out whether or not a piece is biased, either personally or politically.