

Book Review

De Abreu, Belinha S. (2022). Media literacy for justice: lessons for changing the world. Chicago: ALA Neal Schuman, 184pp., \$49.49, ISBN 9798-0-8389-4892-7 (Paper)

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Many of the examples in this work, written by global media literacy educator Belinha S. De Abreu during the pandemic, point to events that occurred during that period, including the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd while in police custody. Media coverage of events in our communities, such as protests, shape our perception of social justice and injustice. Distance, culture, and experience separate us from these situations. Therefore, we must rely on our media literacy skills to help us isolate facts from misinformation and misinterpretation of events. The ten chapters of *Media literacy for justice* address the intersection of mass and social media with social justice issues, including voting rights, criminal justice reform, environmental justice, and health outcomes. Throughout this work, the author emphasizes the role media literacy plays in uncovering facts and helping society to arrive at a consensus on these vital issues.

This work is an exceptional resource for those school library media specialists who seek to teach media literacy through the lens of today's confounding societal issues. All chapters begin with historical quotes from activists (Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King), journalists (Carl Bernstein), filmmakers (George Lucas), poets (Amanda Gorman), or philosophers (Confucius, Montesquieu), followed by De Abreu's explanation of the chapter's subject matter. Each chapter includes a *Reflection* by a professor, media literacy educator, author, teacher, librarian, or student, along with a *Lesson* for educators and students to adopt and adapt. Topics tackle significant issues, including misinformation, disinformation, misrepresentation, and ethics as they relate to social injustice and the digital divide. According to De Abreu, a shared factual starting point is vital for advocacy, debate, and consensus. This book's chapters focus on the intersection of justice and media literacy, providing readers with context, reflections, and lessons. The appendices identify resources that will help educators as they teach and discuss media literacy and justice.

Chapter 1, "Challenging Conversations in Challenging Times", offers insights on how to have difficult discussions about controversial topics, while building a respectful community within the classroom. The *Reflection* and *Lesson* provided by Meredith Baldi and Prescott Seraydarian, teachers at a Quaker school, focus on the need to cultivate curiosity and create empathetic dialogue.

Teaching students about "Misinformation and Disinformation" has become an important aspect of media literacy education work. Nuanced aspects of media literacy, such as bias and loss of trust, are the focus of Chapter 2. Here, De Abreu shows the importance of looking closely at how people and technology interact, particularly in relation to social media. The *Reflection* points to the holistic approach of metaliteracy and

critical cultural literacy, fusing cultural competence with media literacy, historical literacy, racial literacy, emotional literacy, and social justice.

In Chapter 3, “Representation and Missed Representation,” De Abreu addresses how media shapes how we represent ourselves. Media literacy educator Jammeka Anderson’s *Reflection* explains how, over time, media representations “have contributed to negative biases with regard to certain cultural groups, and have reinforced harmful stereotypes of marginalized populations” (p. 32). Anderson emphasizes the need for diverse representations in the media beyond race, gender, and sexual orientation. The *Reflection* shows how “marginalized communities have used new media and social media to redefine their identities through counternarratives” (p.36). The *Lesson* presents activities designed to help students realize how their representations are created by what they see in the media. Each activity includes objectives, warm-up exercises, detailed instructions for conducting the activity with students, and reflection questions to pose to participants.

In “Civics in Society” (Chapter 4), De Abreu discusses several important terms related to civics:

- Civic imagination: “the capacity to imagine alternatives to current social, political, or economic institutions or problems,”
- Civic knowledge: “an understanding of government structures, government processes [...] along with U.S. and global history,”
- Civic skills: “those skills and abilities that allow students to engage in democratic processes in an active and informed way,” and
- Civic dispositions: “the attitudes that are important in a democracy, such as a sense of civic duty and a concern for the welfare of other people” (pp. 44-45).

This civics discussion is accompanied by a *Reflection* on media literacy and civic and political life.

Chapter 5 deals with “Ethical Dilemmas” encountered when reading media stories. De Abreu encourages readers to think about what the media does well, while observing where they fall short. Students should explore how stories are obtained, noting biases and conflicts of interest. This chapter also explores visual ethics, especially important today when images and photographs are so easily manipulated. Chapter 6 illustrates how popular culture and media literacy education can work hand-in-hand, expanding students’ scope of thinking.

The COVID-19 pandemic made the entire world recognize the effects mis- and disinformation have on the health of a nation. In Chapter 7, “Health in Crisis,” De Abreu explains how media literacy can assist with health infodemics. Science teacher and media literacy educator Joanna Marshall’s *Reflection* and *Lesson* address student misconceptions about COVID-19, applying media literacy principles to critical digital health literacy.

Differences in access to digital media across the nation necessitates a range of digital literacy lessons. Chapter 8, “The Digital Divide,” notes the increased need for students to have access to high-speed internet connections for more than just remote learning. De Abreu gives libraries credit as “community builders and bridges” (p. 94) during the pandemic, providing Wi-Fi hotspots, access to databases, supplementary reading materials to students, and also helping with COVID-19 vaccine access. The

Reflection by Michelle Ciccone and Spencer Brayton highlights the complexity of trying to address differences in access to technology as well as unequal mastery of digital skills.

“Worldviews on Engagement and Practice” (Chapter 9) explores how the internet, journalism, and technology have influenced societies around the world. Hong Kong Baptist University professor Alice Y.L. Lee’s *Reflection* looks to media literacy and journalism through a social justice lens. Ryan Farrington’s *Lesson* for high schoolers asks “Is the World Progressing” when it comes to social justice? “Finding Balance” (Chapter 10) explores how algorithms and data/privacy issues affect the notions of equal justice in a divided society.

The target audience for this extraordinarily practical work is the individual teaching media literacy in grades K-12 but could be expanded to include any organization working with the next generation of citizens, including public libraries. Readers are bound to be inspired by the lessons contained in this book and after reading should be in the position to introduce media literacy skills in relation to social justice.