

RACIAL & HEALTH EQUITY: Make It Your Business

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BlueShield**
Minnesota

Learn: The Media We Consume

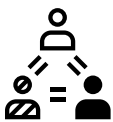


How Diverse is Your Media?

First of all, what do we mean by diversifying media content? Does it mean listening to a little bit of country music and a little bit of jazz? Well, not quite. Diversifying the content, media and information we consume refers to the voices telling and writing the stories we hear. Who are we listening to? Whose perspective are we learning from? Whose story are we allowing to shape our understanding of the world around us?

These questions are important as we consider the media that we choose to consume on a daily basis. Over time, the news media, movies, music, books, podcasts and online content we allow into our lives has a significant impact on our worldview. Obviously, they are not the only influences. Our family, friends, community, life experiences and education all play major roles in developing our worldview over the course of our lives. But when there are gaps in our personal lives like missing father figures, mentors or close friends, we not only fill those voids with other voices, but we also give those voices greater importance than they were meant to have.

Even beyond the deeper need of filling voids in our personal lives we experience media passively on a daily basis. These experiences also have an effect on our worldview. For these two reasons, it is vital that we carefully consider the information we access. Seeking out diverse perspectives is critical to better understanding our world, developing empathy and distinguishing between true and false narratives.



Intentional Diversification

First, without intentionally seeking diversity, the default sources of information available to us are only capable of partial truth. For example, it is not impossible for a white journalist to objectively report a story from a Black community, but without the lens of the Black experience, it is likely that a white reporter may not convey the full significance or impact of the events. And without intentionally seeking diversity in the news sources we subscribe to, they will likely come from the white perspective. According to 2016 data from the American Society of News Editors, Hispanic, Black and Asian women make up less than 5 percent of newsroom personnel at traditional print and online news publications nationally. If we value truth, we must seek out diverse perspectives to ensure the information we take in is balanced and communicated from the communities impacted as often as possible.

Secondly, mindful consumption of content, media and information leads to mindful processing and a need for less. Mindful, in this case, simply means to pay attention. It is too easy to not pay attention to the media we consume. Therefore, being mindful can be a major shift. To make this task easy, consider these three steps:

1. Before you consume the news or media, identify how you feel physically, emotionally and mentally.
2. While you consume the news or media, identify how you feel physically, emotionally, and mentally.
3. After you consume the news or media, identify how you feel physically, emotionally, and mentally.

This three-step process can help you determine if the content was resourceful or helped you process the current events/learning and if that specific media source is worth returning to.

Lastly, diverse voices, experiences and stories help us develop empathy for others. By putting a face to human struggle and suffering, we can imagine what their lives might be like. This connection to real people builds empathy that has been shown to fight inequality and reduce prejudice and racism.

Reflect: Who Are You Seeing and Listening To?



Is the media you consume intentionally chosen to represent diverse voices? Why or why not?

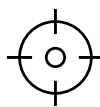
Research and list three sources of media (podcast, print media, social media, etc.) that represents a community other than your own.

Spend time thinking about the people in your community. Are there people whose culture is different than your own? What media could you find to help you understand those cultures in a more meaningful way?

Some questions to consider:

1. How much time, overall, did you spend consuming media?
2. What was the most valuable and least valuable source on your list?
3. If you collected all the voices you heard over the last week into one group would you describe those voices as 'Not Diverse,' 'Kind of Diverse,' or 'Very Diverse'?

Change: Steps Toward Progress



Be Intentional

The amount and availability of media is greater than we have ever had in human history. We can fall victim to passive media consumption that subconsciously shapes our understanding of the world around us. Intentional and mindful consumption of media can help us identify false narratives, support diverse storytelling and develop empathy for people throughout our community.



Be Mindful

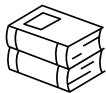
Be aware of what you watch, read and listen to. With so much content available, simply being aware requires more effort than you might think. One activity that might help is to keep a running list of all the media you consume over the course of a week. Write down everything in one place and then evaluate it over the next week. You might even consider jotting down how much time you watched, read or listened to something, notes on diversity including race, gender, ability and more, and how you felt afterwards (e.g., angry, sad, tired, happy, informed, entertained).



Develop More Diverse Content and Media Sources

- 1. Reflect.** Spend time thinking about communities of people that you don't know as much about. If you're white, that might mean new immigrant populations in your community, the Indigenous peoples of your area or your BIPOC neighbor's community. From your ideas choose three to pursue more information on.
- 2. Research.** Now that you have your three community groups, spend time researching authors, news media, music, movies and more that was produced by or features someone from that community.
- 3. Subscribe.** If you're really interested in a certain type of media, there is likely a way to get that information delivered to you on a regular basis. Newspapers, magazines, e-newsletters, social media, podcasts and more can all be delivered directly to you daily, weekly or monthly. Use these tools to intentionally fill your inbox, mailbox and headphones with diverse content that expands your worldview.

Learn More



- Black Lives Matter, Curated list of movies on Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/browse/genre/81299227?so=su>
- 25 Best Books by BIPOC authors in 2020, <https://www.redbookmag.com/life/g34991012/bipoc-authors-2020/?slide=17>
- "Centering Black, Indigenous, and POC voices, Prism tells the stories traditional media overlooks," Prism, <https://www.prismreports.org/article/2020/6/10/centering-black-indigenous-and-poc-voices-prism-tells-the-stories-traditional-media-overlooks>
- 5 Podcasts To Listen To If You Really Want To Know About Race In America, WBUR, <https://www.wbur.org/artery/2020/06/05/podcasts-to-listen-to-about-race-america>

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"The Modern Newsroom Is Stuck Behind The Gender And Color Line," NPR News, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/05/01/492982066/the-modern-newsroom-is-stuck-behind-the-gender-and-color-line>

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