

In This Issue...

Theme: Media Literacy and Human Rights **02**

We offer examples of media coverage on human rights and we discuss opportunities missed by Western media in covering some of the most important humanitarian crises of our times.

Research Highlights **04**

The constructed nature of media is highly visible in examples of human rights coverage – from genocide to disabilities to incidents of civic rights violations. CML offers diverse examples of construction at work.

CML News **10**

The first US Media Literacy Week was a success. We offer links to some of the inspiring conversations and events that happened in Los Angeles.

Media Literacy Resources **11**

CML interviews media literacy and human rights advocate Robert Ferguson of the UK. Ferguson is participating in an EU project to identify and cultivate "learning leaders" among the Roma populations of Europe.

Med!aLit Moments **16**

In this MediaLit Moment, students discuss freedom of expression or lack thereof, evoked in a scene from a film.

Theme: Media Literacy and Human Rights

In the last few months, media attention has been drawn to the massive migration of refugees to Europe from Africa and the Middle East from ports on the Mediterranean. Migration from these areas has been common in the past three decades, but clearly the numbers have been ratcheting up. In 2013, 60,000 made the crossing. In 2014, that number was 219,000 (Human Rights Watch, "The Mediterranean Migration Crisis"). Tragically, the number of deaths at sea has also been rising. In 2014, 3,500 lost their lives attempting the crossing; and, with 1,850 deaths in the first five months of 2015, it's possible that a new record will be set (ibid.).

One of the greatest contributors to the flow of refugees is the Syrian civil war. As of Nov. 2015, the UN High Commission for Refugees has registered 4,287,293 Syrian refugees. Turkey has taken in 1.7 million refugees, and Lebanon 1.2 million--one quarter of its population. By now, neighboring countries are beginning to refuse entry, and Syrian refugees must seek asylum in more and more distant locations. In the EU, the German government has pledged to resettle 800,000 refugees, while in Britain, Prime Minister David Cameron has pledged to take in 20,000 refugees over five years.

Now, ask yourself, to what extent did the last two paragraphs elicit your empathy for those attempting to make the trip? While there are a number of terms to describe what we've done, we can say that our use of facts and figures created an emotional distance between you and the incoming refugees. Examining perspective in media is an important media literacy skill. In drawing primarily from the statistics in the Human Rights Watch report, we actually diminished our perspective. We had less scope to see the refugees as human beings. What's interesting to note is that political parties on both the left and right may use the same terms and techniques to describe refugees while they attempt to gain political advantage over each other--as if any refugee could be condensed into an issue or problem to be solved. Many news stories--even those which are sympathetic to the plight of refugees--tend to describe them in terms which create a divide between "us" and "them" (Balabanova, *The Media and Human Rights*, p.139 ff.).

And, of course, some are described in negative, even stereotypic terms. Boat people. Queue jumpers. Criminals. Terrorists. A particularly noteworthy example is the *Tampa* incident. In August 2001, a group of about 400 Afghan and Iraqi refugees on a fishing boat in the Indian Ocean attempted to seek asylum in Australia. When they ended up stranded in Indonesian waters, the *Tampa*, a Norwegian merchant vessel, picked them up. A political standoff ensued. The captain of the *Tampa* reported that many passengers seemed to be suffering from dysentery. The Australian government kept directing the *Tampa* to bring the refugees back to Indonesian waters when Christmas Island, an Australian possession, was much closer. When the captain of the *Tampa* kept his course for Christmas Island, then-Prime Minister John Howard ordered the Australian Special Air

Services (equivalent to our Special Forces) to board the *Tampa* and bring it out of Australian waters.

Though the boarding of the *Tampa* might not have been televised, it clearly signified to any would-be asylum seekers that the Howard Government viewed them as invaders to be repelled at all costs. Moreover, Howard apparently directed the communications departments of government bodies to approach the incident with a similar anti-immigrant frame. In the 2011 Australian Broadcasting Corporation television documentary "The Leaky Boat," defense officials interviewed claimed they received instructions from Canberra not to release any information "that might humanize these people" (Bartlett, "A Drop in the Ocean," p. 10). Howard, whose poll numbers had been sagging, was able to exploit both the media and Australian popular anti-immigrant sentiment to handily win re-election (Bartlett, p. 9).

In this issue of *Connections*, we find some examples of media coverage on human rights and we discuss opportunities missed by Western media in covering some of the most important humanitarian crises of our times and we demonstrate how Latin American news media are able to promote and defend human rights. We discuss the links between media and government, and we train our lens on the disability rights movement to illuminate the human rights dimensions of our everyday lives. In all cases, we demonstrate the need for coverage of human rights that provides audiences with the moral tools for empathy, and the context and analysis needed to take action to end avoidable suffering.

Research Highlights

International Media Coverage of Human Rights

Unless they've already gained some expertise in the social and political background of countries they're stationed in, news reporters on international humanitarian crises will often lack the resources and contextual knowledge needed to present an accurate account of events as they unfold. Take the case of news reporting on the 1994 Rwandan genocide, for example. As the killing began, few Western journalists were on the ground, and these depicted the violence as a tribal conflict without offering information about political context. Western readers were left to wonder, did the two sides just have a sudden spike of hatred towards each other? While they may not have intended to do so, the first reporters in Rwanda reinforced stereotypes of Africa as a chaotic, dangerous and dark place. From a media literacy perspective, the lack of political context signals that it's time to examine news reports for what has been omitted, and for their overall credibility.

In fact, the conflict was anything but spontaneous. It was the result of a pre-planned and deliberate policy of genocide (Balabanova, 125-126). State-owned media controlled by the Hutu majority were directly involved. Radio FTLM propagated anti-Tutsi propaganda. Broadcasts referred to the killings as 'work' and labeled minority Tutsis 'cockroaches.' Tutsis were depicted as the cause of political instability and the source of all economic hardship for the Hutu population. Not only did RTLM staff explain who the enemy was and why. They detailed what was to be done with the enemy, and provided specific directions to armed Hutu gangs on the time and location of new attacks.

Like any other media, news is constructed. If a news source is prestigious, it may define the "news of the day" for most audiences, while important stories may still be languishing on the cutting room "floor." In part, few Western media outlets covered the unfolding humanitarian disaster in Rwanda because they took their lead from Western political actors. The genocide took place in the aftermath of US involvement in Somalia in 1993, when 18 US troops were killed in the capital, Mogadishu. Following this, neither the U.S. nor the U.N. was keen to undertake another intervention in another African country. The reluctance was underscored by a 1994 Presidential Directive which stipulated that any future multilateral intervention must include a clear statement of U.S. interests.

Unfortunately, Rwanda itself was a land-locked francophone country of little geostrategic importance to Western powers. According to one media observer, "Initially. . . Rwanda seemed a case of media attention calibrated not to the magnitude of the killing but to the level of interest it was arousing in distant capitals" (quoted in Balabanova, 127). Just as journalists sometimes rely on government sources for their stories, journalists sometimes rely on governments as they construct narratives of political events.

And, unfortunately, other stories took precedence. Nelson Mandela was about to be sworn in as South Africa's first black president. Broadcasters calculated that the Western audience

was incapable of dealing with both a good and a bad news story from Africa simultaneously. News on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was providing no end of newsworthy stories for both European and American news producers. And the OJ Simpson trial, with its irresistible combination of sports, glamour and violence, was dominating news in the U.S. (Balabanova, p. 128).

Because very few Western journalists and photographers were on the ground in the midst of the conflict, there were few stories with accompanying images to rouse audience attention. Coverage increased only when the subsequent refugee crisis began to unfold, and broadcast and print news could present graphic images of human suffering and tell a story that was uncomplicated and simple. As two media scholars pointed out, "Covering genocide meant having to understand politics to assess both domestic and international accountability. By comparison, covering refugees was easy" (quoted in Balabanova, p. 129).

One of the international principles of humanitarian intervention is the "Responsibility to Protect," approved at the 2005 UN World Summit. The 'R2P' principle holds that sovereign nations must protect the lives of their own citizens, and that other nations may step in to protect those citizens when genocidal campaigns or crimes against humanity are taking place. As media literate citizens, it's our task to search out the context of conflicts abroad, and to pressure our elected governments to take action when the intention to commit mass murder is clear.

Disability Rights: Media Portrayal of Human Rights in the United States

In this case we turn to a topic which few journalists, and perhaps fewer audiences, think of as a matter of human rights--the rights of disabled individuals in society. The oversight can be excused to some extent due to the historical context in which human rights developed. Western-style democracies recognize civil and political rights such as voting, speech, expression, assembly, and protection from torture. In popular discourse, these first generation rights are often the only rights. And yet human rights literature and major treaties include what have been called 'second generation' rights --economic and social rights such as the right to work, the right to adequate health services, the right to housing, the right to education, the right to economic security. (The last of these is mentioned in Franklin Roosevelt's 1941 declaration of the Four Freedoms, which include Freedom from Want).

As social theorist Jim Ife notes, these rights ". . . are often not associated in media reports, with 'human rights'; for example, a country with inadequate health services or a poor education system would not be described as a country with a 'poor human rights record.' Yet such human rights are just as important as the first generation of civil and political rights, and indeed they go together" (quoted in Klein, "The Rhetoric and Ideology of Human Rights in the Media," p.44).

In the U.S., protection against employment discrimination was one of the first economic and social rights claimed by disabled people. In 1938, the League of the Physically Handicapped

demanded an end to employment discrimination on WPA projects. The records of capable workers, many of whom had only minor disabilities, were stamped PH (for "physically handicapped"), which meant that they could not be considered for government jobs by the Home Relief Agencies that employed some of their recipients. With demonstrations, picket lines, sit-ins, the occupation of the New York City Emergency Relief Bureau, and the 10 day trial which followed, the League successfully garnered media attention for its civil rights agenda. Publicity emanating from the trial resulted in the elimination of the PH category and the acquisition of WPA jobs by League members (Fleischer and Zames, "Disability and Media in the 21st Century," p. 185).

There have also been notable defeats, perhaps most poignantly the case of Lyn Thompson. Thompson, disabled by muscular dystrophy, set up a business in her home operating an answering service that allowed her to support herself financially. As a result, California Medicaid barred her claim of disability. Not only did she lose health coverage and personal attendant service, she was also informed that she would be forced to enter a nursing home--ironically, at considerable taxpayer expense. Thompson was profiled in a 1978 "60 Minutes" program. Less than a month after Thompson's interview was aired, the law was changed in California. Unfortunately, Thompson was unaware of these changes, and chose suicide over the prospect of losing her independence. Despite subsequent legislation to address such barriers to self-sufficiency, laws such as the one that drove Thompson to take her life still exist in many states (Fleischer and Zames, p. 192).

Media response to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which extends civil rights law for people with disabilities beyond the public sector to the private sector, has been uneven at best. In a 1995 op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* (a newspaper which strongly opposed the Act), Attorneys General Dick Thornburgh and Janet Reno wrote in favor of the ADA, observing that it fostered the employment of people with physical and mental impairments, making them taxpayers and not just tax users. More often, the Act was misunderstood, mischaracterized, or simply attacked.

In the area of education, the provision of special education services has been framed as a zero sum contest between children with disabilities and nondisabled children. In a 1996 "60 Minutes" program, Leslie Stahl suggested that nondisabled children were being "shortchanged in order to pay for special ed." One parent interviewed asserted that education funding for students such as his nondisabled child was "being pared back to pay for special education," for example by the "elimination of programs for the gifted and talented children." Implied in the statement is the notion that disability and intelligence are mutually exclusive. Other commentators, most notoriously ABC's John Stossel, indulged in selective criticism of ADA lawsuits, consistently picking out those which betrayed a misguided interpretation of the Act (Fleischer and Zames, 200). In this case, selection of stories constructed a news frame in which the ADA appeared to permit irresponsible or unprofessional behavior in schools and workplaces at taxpayer expense.

Finally, and most importantly, human rights issues are quite often omitted from media narratives about disabled people. Perhaps most egregious has been the exploitation of disabled children for the purpose of fundraising. The poster child, the image of an appealing-looking child with a specific disability who symbolized helplessness, was used to elicit sympathy. Such children might also be brought into studios to help raise money for events such as the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Association Telethons of the 1960s and 1970s. The implication that the money raised would be used to cure these particular children was misleading. Furthermore, adults with disabilities began to question their exclusion from such public relations strategies, and asked how children with disabilities could mature into adults when no adult role models were featured at these events. (Fleischer and Zames, *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation*, 2001, no page cited).

More recently, Towson University Professor of Journalism Beth Haller issued a nuanced critique of a 2001 Pulitzer Prize-winning series by Sam Lightner on a teenager with a facial deformity who was 'coping with adversity.' Calling for journalists to "give more time to problems caused by the outside world's prejudice" against people with similar disfigurements, and "less space to the medical issues," Haller argued that a focus on inspirational and one-dimensional stories of a person's life with a disability was more likely to foster pity than generate social change, and she encouraged journalists to deal more directly with social barriers to integration of the disability population (quoted in Fleischer and Zames, 210).

The Domestic Human Rights Beat in Mexican News

Even in Western democratic countries, news media may be slow to publish stories about human rights violations within their borders, and may actually deflect attention to human rights abuses perpetrated by rival countries. In Mexico, by contrast, criticism of domestic rights abuses make its way front and center into the news on a daily basis. In examining the Mexican human rights 'beat,' it's possible to discern what makes for a good human rights story, the journalistic aims that drive the publishers of human rights news, and the news values which determine which human rights stories are published on any given day.

In one sense, the domestic human rights beat in Mexico developed as a result of human rights activism. In 1976, the Tlateloco Massacre, a violent clash between protesting students and police, left hundreds of protestors dead. In the following days, newspapers loyal to the reigning Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI) disseminated government accounts of a few dozen killed. Word on the street was that the death toll had been much higher. People took to the avenues chanting *Prensa vendida!* ('Sell-out press!') With the credibility of state-owned news publishers in severe disarray, a core group of journalists decided to focus on independence from the state and a greater watchdog stance (McPherson, "How Editors Choose Which Human Rights News to Cover," p. 99).

Through interviews with journalists at several Mexican newspapers with a human rights beat, journalism scholar Ella McPherson was able to piece together a set of news values driving

human rights coverage. First, human rights stories are indeed about violations. As one reporter explained, ". . . a story about the military destroying houses in a community is just more interesting and 'tells us more' than the story of an NGO and the government signing an agreement" (McPherson, 107).

Other news values include: novelty, exclusivity, impact, representativeness, and timeliness. An editor at *La Jornada* described novelty as "something you don't know about." Exclusivity is valued not only for the 'scoop' but also for its shelf life, which lasts as long as the information can be kept from other media. Such exclusivity is valued for the flexibility it gives editors in planning their pages (McPherson, 108).

When a government authority is accused of a violation, the story has inherent political impact, though the scale of impact varies depending on the accused or on the type of accusation. Newsmakers also measure impact according to the scale and/or severity of the violation. For example, the Atenco incident of 2006, in which police attempted to forcibly relocate a group of street vendors, and which resulted in serious casualties on both sides, generated significant human rights coverage. Stories featuring a single victim can also have significant impact when the violation is considered severe. For example, when Paulina Ramirez, a 13-year-old girl, became pregnant as the result of a rape, state officials illegally denied her the right to an abortion. One journalist interviewed by McPherson considered her case newsworthy because of her age, the 'adding insult to injury' aspect of the violation, and the nature of the violation itself (ibid). The case eventually made its way to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Single-victim violations can also be valuable if they are representative of a wider phenomenon. According to one journalist interviewed, a newsworthy story has "sufficient elements to represent or crystallize an activity or a way of being that is repetitive and continuous on the part of the authorities, that is not restricted to the individual complaint but that is representative of a real problem that is repeated" (ibid.).

Finally, the more timely a human rights story is, the more newsworthy journalists see it as being. They refer to such a story as having *conjuntura* (conjuncture) because of its relation to current events--what journalists in the U.S. often call a 'news peg' (McPherson, 109). While news values play a leading role in the publication of human rights news, journalistic aims -- the ideal role that journalists believe their media institutions play in society--was central to their coverage. One editor interviewed actually went so far as to say, "What we are looking for --more than newsworthiness --is that the violation of human rights doesn't happen anymore" (114). McPherson also notes that, at several newspapers, resources are devoted to human rights reporting in part because it is a "surefire route to pursuing democratic journalistic aims" (110).

The journalists in McPherson's sample also had specific, concrete journalistic aims. Human rights coverage can serve as a check against violations, journalists said, both through its

publication and through its practice, namely through *bearing witness* and through *being witness* (ibid., emphasis in original).

In Mexico, a group of semi-autonomous human rights commissions monitors the national human rights situation by investigating citizen complaints against state institutions. In turn, human rights reporters publicize the non-binding recommendations of the commissions, and help monitor state institution compliance. One journalist interviewed by McPherson vividly reflected: "The human rights commission pressures the government institution, but if the media doesn't pick up this moral pressure, the institution says, 'Well, nothing happened, the commission said that I didn't fulfill X, but nothing happened to me. But if the commission says it and ten newspapers are going to publish it, and Amnesty International might find out, the institution feels pressure to fulfill its obligations. . . If the people don't find out because we don't publish it, the authority just says, 'Whatever.' Moral pressure is how this system functions" (112).

The media's ability to stop human rights violations can occur via face-to-face monitoring as well. McPherson writes: "The physical practice of covering human rights--being witness--is a powerful tool for stopping human rights violations, journalists said. In essence, the threat of the media's coverage is enough to prevent violations from occurring if that coverage is guaranteed" (ibid).

From a media literacy standpoint, one of the most interesting things about independent Mexican newspapers with a human rights beat is the relationships of power and profit that they generate. Bearing witness can have economic power. According to McPherson, ". . . even readers uninterested in human rights may become loyal readers of a newspaper that covers human rights, not for the information this type of story contains but for what it connotes about the credibility of the rest of the information in the newspaper" (116). And, as the relationships between state institutions, human rights commissions and news media demonstrate, papers with a human rights beat sometimes do have the power to act as a "fourth estate" -- as institutions which can provide a check against unfettered state power.

Finally, journalists interviewed felt that their coverage has an important educational aspect. Several mentioned that they wrote human rights stories with the aim that their readers 'learn that they have rights,' and hoped that the public would deploy human rights knowledge to their advantage in their relationship with the state. As one said, the public "themselves can defend their integrity, their citizenship, their lives" (113).



Find videos of Panel Discussion here



Educators with the Korea Press Foundation visited Los Feliz Charter School in Los Angeles.

The first US Media Literacy Week took place November 2-6 across the nation. Here's an overview of CML's participation.

Thought Leaders Panel Discussion on the state of media literacy. Panelists included: Liebe Geft, Director, Museum of Tolerance, Mark Slavkin, Director of Education for Wallis Annenberg Center for Performing Arts, Tessa Jolls, Center for Media Literacy. Moderated by Brian Lowry, Journalist, *Variety*. Videos of the panel discussion are posted on CML's YouTube Channel in four segments.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LP2JJZFlaAw>

CML hosted a delegation of educators from the Korea Press Foundation during Media Literacy Week. The visit included three days of media literacy training with Tessa Jolls, and tours of the Museum of Tolerance and the Japanese American National Museum. The delegation also visited a 5th grade classroom at Los Feliz Charter School in Los Angeles to see media literacy education in action.

Tessa Jolls held a Reddit *Ask Me Anything* forum. Find the transcript on [our website](#).



Frank Baker, talked to middle school students at the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences in LA.



The CSUN newspaper covered the Media Literacy Week events on campus.

Thank you to all of the Media Literacy Week participants in the Los Angeles area. Find more information on their websites.

[Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences](#)

[AnimAction](#)

[California State University Northridge, Journalism](#)

[CyberWise](#)

[Japanese American National Museum](#)

[Los Feliz Charter School for the Arts](#)

[Museum of Tolerance](#)

[Pauline Center for Media Studies](#)

[UCLA School of Education](#)

[USC Annenberg School for Communication](#)

[USC Marshall School of Business/Variety/PwC](#)

[Westside Neighborhood School](#)

CONSORTIUM
for **MEDIA LITERACY**

Uniting for Development

About Us...

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

Resources for Media Literacy

Robert Ferguson discusses his work with Roma in the UK

Robert Ferguson has been a Professor of Culture and Media Studies at the Institute of Education, University College of London, for the last thirty years. His specialties have been critical studies, media education, and media studies, including racism and media. For the last nine years, he has been involved in the Institute's International Centre for Intercultural Studies. Currently, Ferguson is participating in an EU project to identify and cultivate "learning leaders" among the Roma populations of Europe who can encourage members of their communities to avail themselves of educational opportunities in their host countries and develop a sense of social participation in their communities of residence. Ferguson's contributions to the project include media literacy curricula to counter ethnic stereotypes and advance intercultural understanding. Final reports and recommendations will be delivered in late 2015 or early 2016.

CML: So what have you been emphasizing in your work with Roma in the UK?

RF: One of the main problems is talking about Roma, rather than talking with them. We need to avoid programs that are patronizing. Roma do not easily trust outsiders, and for many good reasons. What we hope will be the outcome of this project is mutual respect, and an opportunity for honest debates, which are not too constrained by cultural or other pre-judgments, about what is important to them.

One of the difficulties of this project is that, with the EU, everything must be recordable, and with specific learning outcomes. Other partners have sent in their Work Package 2 reports. At the end of our report, we outlined core issues to consider, and to problematize. For example, the first core issue is, should Roma move towards integration? Should they all learn the skills of literacy and numeracy? Is that at the top of their agenda? Whether and when should they pursue broad educational aspirations? In our discussions with Roma groups, many were more interested in training rather than education. Many women wanted to be hairdressers. Many men wanted to learn carpentry. Some wanted to learn martial arts. Did we want the Roma Learning Leaders to speak to their communities, and deliver a pitch for education? No.

In meetings with the Roma community, it turned out that more than half are university graduates. And they were not particularly interested in society. They have their own history, and making a commitment to attend made it possible for them to talk with others about it. They were in their late 20s and early 30s. When they discussed the kind of education they were interested in, it was mainly about learning skills that could earn them money. So often the Roma people live in different social and economic environments. Not all Roma know that Roma were persecuted in the Holocaust. We have one partner in France who is a Roma professor of theoretical linguistics. He spoke at length about the injustices, and the discrimination that were so endemic in European societies, and he sometimes seemed disillusioned about any possibilities for change. His actual approach to the study of the

Holocaust was, however, rooted in a passionate belief in the value of teaching and learning history.

People in London are prejudiced, but at least in the UK Roma have fewer fears that they'll be murdered on the street, something more common in Eastern Europe. There are many different contexts for the Roma who are involved in the project. The school systems in Romania, Bulgaria and France are different. They differ in their willingness to get involved with education. And in the UK, we have different groups. There are Roma, but there are also Gypsies. There are traveling carnival performers, and Irish Travelers. And there are even hierarchies of Roma in Europe. In Romania and Bosnia, the kids come and clean car windows, whereas in the UK, until recently that would not have been deemed socially acceptable.

CML: Did the Roma you spoke with have any educational aspirations?

RF: If they did go to university, they had the potential for a career, though, like many graduates, that didn't guarantee them a job. With our group, we asked the education officers in our borough to help keep in touch with our Roma participants. We attracted the interest of adult members. We did our best to avoid talking about how great education is. With that approach, the Roma may listen politely, but may well be thinking, "They think this is easy." They've had so many bad experiences. Sometimes Roma people create an identity for themselves by *not* identifying themselves as Roma.

CML: What programs did you put together for Roma who attended the meetings?

RF: The contribution we tried to make was on two levels--with experiential learning methods, and with education for intercultural understanding. We had ways of working with groups to help them experience who they are, and how they are. We also included material on media representations of identity, though we didn't address that until the end. We had practical exercises for them: What do you think that is? Part of that involved a series of presentations of stereotypes--the French, the German. Oh, do you think that's a Frenchman? How do you know? It was part of a larger PowerPoint presentation. It was interesting for them to compare their reactions with others in their communities. It was intended to jump start the critical thinking process, and hopefully it engaged them with the rest of the world, and to see how they related with it.

We attempted to engage them critically with the fact that sometimes we're all part of this process--that we're engaged in some form of stereotyping. We did try to encourage them to recognize that they are citizens in a democracy with rights and responsibilities, so that they could face racism head-on with both determination and humility.

CML: How are Roma children faring in British schools?

RF: In metropolitan cities in the UK, there are plenty of different languages in the schools. The Chinese seem to be doing the best in London. It used to be the Indians. It's the white working class students that aren't doing so well. According to the Local Education Authorities, the Roma are supposedly fitting in, but parents are often pulling children out of school due to bullying. And the challenge for the LEA's is, how to reach them at all? In Haringay, where we've been working, we have education officers who have been liaising with the Roma community, and a number of them are experienced teachers. There's also another organization working with Roma on the other side of London. At their meetings, they have had as many as 30 to 50 Roma, and they're often a bit younger, and not speaking so much of wanting to go to university, but again to considering crafts and carpentry. The real need is for them to be represented across a range of issues. We have encouraged life-long learning with them. It's a state of mind that fosters critical thinking, and it's linked to education. And, of course, it's linked to our work in culture and media studies.

CML: Can you tell us more about the Institute of Education?

RF: The Institute of Education is part of University College London, and was founded in 1902. The institute offers students one-year postgraduate degrees and a full research doctoral program across the curriculum. The IOE is top in world rankings for education research and teacher training. For a long time we've had an emphasis on what used to be called multicultural education. We've been involved in many European projects. For example, one of the problems we attempted to tackle was the Bosnian general curriculum. How could we make it acceptable to everyone involved? These are problems that are not easily solvable, or not solvable for generations. Essentially, their response to our recommendations was, 'That was really very interesting, but I've got to get on with my life.' The challenge is to raise issues over periods of time to bring about tolerant societies that believe in the value of education.

CML: What do you imagine will be some of the outcomes of the Roma Learning Leaders project?

RF: It's going to be interesting to see how the Roma Learning Leaders study turns out. The partner organizations [organized by country] can't just heap responsibility on the learning leaders. They're all volunteers. That's one reason why we wanted to engage Roma in problematizing their values about education, rather than laying out a set of learning outcomes to reach. We wanted to emphasize building self-respect, and boosting confidence.

CML: What's the organizational structure of the project?

RF: The Spanish are in charge of evaluation, and there will be meetings in every country. The materials developed in each country will be tested in that country. Otherwise, the project would take far too long.

CML: So, after reviewing your most recent report on the Roma Learning Leaders project, we understand that you interacted with the Roma Learning Leaders, with Focus Groups, and with Key Informants. What were their roles, what kinds of information did you gather from them, and were there any differences in background?

RF: Our Key Informants were the academics who worked with or were researching Roma communities, especially Doctor Kate D'Arcy. It was actually through the Roma Support Group in East London that we found our contacts. We met for the first time in a meeting in Haringay [in north London]. A woman came and spoke there who was a full time staff member, and we talked with her afterwards. It was through them that we made our contacts with all the young Roma people, and with their parents. Otherwise we still would probably have been looking around. If the Roma see a motivating reason to work with someone, or if they see someone involved that they trust, it's easier to talk with them. In this, of course, they are pretty much the same as any social group.

CML: Have the Roma groups had a chance to review the materials you've produced?

RF: The Roma learning leaders and the groups we spoke with spoke to materials we produced. Most of the things they said were very supportive. Some were talking about education in terms that were almost assertive. One mother said, what else is there but education? At the same time, they are--often because of their attitude--having problems with their own families. When we spoke with them, it was very much like the problems working class white kids have in the UK, where parents ask, what good is education going to do for you? There are many different narratives that can be told. We have people who say, my father never really believed in education. Others had or have parents who were very committed.

One young woman who had played the violin told us that she had been offered an audition to play with the London Youth Orchestra. Her family said that was not a good idea and that she should not do it. She told us that she had put her violin away and never played it since. There was some sadness in her account, but no hint of reproach towards her parents. It was just the way things were. At the same time, she and her husband were both committed to education and employment.

CML: Which group responded to your PowerPoint presentation on media stereotypes? What kind of discussion did you have about the story of Dorothy Counts? The advertisement for the Prince's Youth Business Trust?

RF: We had ten young people who were parents--many Roma start having families when they are young. One member of the group did have a degree in drama. He was an out-of-work actor, and he was really excited about the semiotic side of the PowerPoint. The purpose of the PowerPoint was to lead them towards thinking about their own representation of themselves. It was a group of four men and six women. With regard to

the story of Dorothy Counts [a 15-year-old girl who attempted to attend a segregated white high school in the South in 1957, and who later became a civil rights activist] we wanted to ask, do you find this appealing? They were gobsmacked. Their expressions all indicated recognition-as if to say, yes, we know that kind of thing goes on! They were not so much up for discussion, but they were very interested in the process of recognition. Had we spent days with them, we likely would have been talking. One member of our Roma staff, Dada, was quite impressed. They wrote two or three, a max of four sentences. These were not long comments, but they were acknowledging things that they had seen elsewhere. When we introduced the Prince's Youth Business Trust [an organization which provides seed funding and technical support for disadvantaged youth who wish to start a business], we used the advert in a very direct way--to show that it was designed as a hook. On its face, it legitimized the notion that all black people are potentially thieves by suggesting that Sydney's preferential career might be in burglary. This was an open invitation to stereotypical labeling. We wanted to show that different communities are treated as minorities, and didn't say any more. We were just interested in getting them to see relationships, and share relationships.

CML: When will we have a chance to see your final report?

RF: At the end of the year, or March of next year at the latest. We'll have a PowerPoint pitch ready when the project is complete. We would also love to have an invitation to speak about the project in the U.S.

MediaLit Moments

Style in War Time

Freedom of information, expression and opinion sometimes is taken for granted in the U.S. In Marjane Satrapi's animated autobiographical film *Persepolis*, the potential loss of those freedoms is rendered in stark relief. While the adult members of Marjane's family struggle with political oppression in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, young Marjane struggles with finding her voice and identity. In this MediaLit Moment, your middle level students will discover the personal aspects of freedom of expression as they learn about the barriers Marjane must contend with.

Ask students to discuss rights to freedom of expression evoked in a scene from a film

AHA! This scene isn't just about what Marjane can't buy or wear, it's about the things that make it hard for her to say who she is!

Grade Level: 7-9

Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles and points of view are embedded in, or omitted from, this message?

Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view.

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

Materials: Computer with high speed internet connection, LCD projector, screen; DVD or electronic copy of *Persepolis* (2.4.7 Films, 2007; PG-13, French language/English subtitles).

Activity: Ask students to think of a time when they felt like someone was 'cramping' their style. What did that feel like? What did they do about it? After this discussion, give students some background on the Iranian Revolution, and the social and political repression that followed.

Introduce a sequence from *Persepolis* in which Marjane buys an "Iron Maiden" album, barely avoids being taken to the authorities, and plays monster metal 'air guitar' on her tennis racket when she's finally in the comfort of her home. The sequence begins at 26:44 when Marjane crosses the street to see the black market vendors, and ends around 29:40.

Lead a discussion in which students attempt to define what rights this sequence is 'about.' At some point, ask them how personal style figures in this conversation.

Given that this is an animated film, take at least some time to discuss the links between form and content. Why do they think that Satrapi wanted to use black and white in this sequence? What effect does it have? What techniques are used to show that Marjane feels like she's powerless? What techniques are used to show that she feels powerful? How are the black market vendors, Marjane's mother and the two devout women portrayed?

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