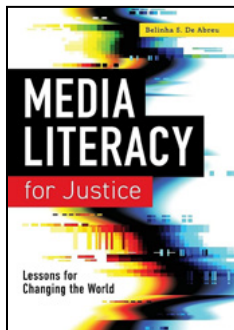


**Belinha S. De Abreu.** *Media Literacy for Justice: Lessons for Changing the World.* Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2022, 184 p. \$54.99 (\$49.49 ALA members) ISBN: 978-0-8389-4892-7



There can be no doubt that the contributors to this work understand the gravity of media literacy and its connection to social justice. As Asha Rangappa, former FBI agent and senior lecturer at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, notes in the preface, "Media literacy—the ability to discern the accuracy, credibility, or evidence of bias in media content—is now literally a matter of life and death in America." Written in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this book offers "school library media specialists, classroom teachers of various subject areas, higher educators, and non-profits that do work in K–12 and higher education" a space to discuss and share resources

surrounding media literacy and its intersection with social justice, given the quickly changing landscape of media and the role it played during the pandemic (xix). As is the case with many broad reaching and quickly produced collections, the content is, at times, uneven and surface level. However, there are valuable resources here, especially for those who are interested in lesson and activity planning.

The book is divided into ten chapters, each of which includes a short introductory essay written by the editor, Belinha S. De Abreu, followed by a reflection and suggested lesson plan written by guest authors. Topics include guidance on facilitating challenging conversations, misinformation and disinformation, representation and "missed representation," civics and society, ethical dilemmas, popular culture, health information access and COVID-19, digital access and the digital divide, worldwide political justice engagement, and the future of media literacy education. In addition, four appendixes provide additional resources for implementing presented lesson plans, including lists of social justice and media literacy organizations, suggested popular media that discuss social justice, and information on the Critical Media Project and the Critical Literacy Project Roundtables.

While these contents seem broad and all encompassing, the short introductory essays can leave much to be desired. There was little discussion of how each author's understanding of the subject fits into current research, and the brief explanations of concepts offered by the editor often lack nuance. For example, De Abreu offers guidance for facilitating classroom discussions around controversial topics, noting that "we are at a point today where censorship and the canceling of people's voices have become the norm rather than the exception." She then quotes from "A Letter on Justice and Open Debate," published in *Harper's*, noting briefly that "there was pushback against this letter on various social media platforms, but the letter, and the ensuing controversy, did succeed in drawing more attention to the issue of cancel culture" (5). This is a radical minimization of the "controversy" regarding the letter, which included the withdrawal of support by one signer, Kerri Greenidge, and a response letter written by a group of journalists of color who called out the oversimplification of cancel culture the letter offers without acknowledging "how marginalized voices have been silenced for generations in journalism, academia, and publishing." While it is necessary to discuss cancel culture and its relationship to censorship, there are other, more productive examples of this dichotomy that

also acknowledge the historical marginalization of “othered” voices and the roots of cancel culture within marginalized communities.

The text is strongest when it offers reflection and lesson prompts. Contributed reflections are more focused and provide concrete examples from a range of experiences. Take for instance Nicole A. Cooke’s discussion of misinformation and disinformation, which advocates for a “critical cultural literacy” that “fuses cultural competence with...historical literacy, racial literacy, emotional literacy, and social justice” (23). Her approach enables conversations between educators and students to acknowledge societal and historical inequities that contribute to the creation of dis/misinformation as well as offer building blocks to quickly recognize and combat dis/misinformation. Pair this with the excellent lesson plan offered by Kathleen Currie Smith, which teaches students how to investigate the bias and framing narratives journalists and news outlets use for their stories, and you have a ready-made lesson on recognizing media bias. Another great example of this type of pairing is offered in chapter 6. Blake Goble, Pam Goble, and Ryan Goble offer a reflection and a lesson plan that both focus on incorporating popular culture into the classroom. As they astutely point out, educators “can use pop texts to help students move beyond binaries while cultivating more civil, cooperative, compassionate, and just communities” (73). They offer practical suggestions on how to handle historical inaccuracies and strategies for teaching critical perspectives on the capitalist nature of media companies while also celebrating culture that students and educators alike enjoy and consume. In addition, appendix C offers a great overview of the online repository Critical Media Project, which I would recommend over the small appendix B offered in the book itself.

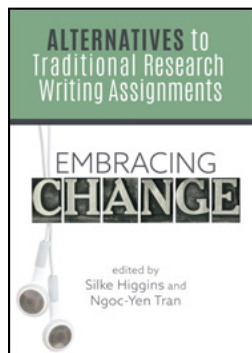
Overall, this book is helpful in addressing practical classroom strategies but lacks sufficient engagement with critical media theory and the rich scholarly conversation that is ongoing in the field. Clearly media literacy and social justice is a topic educators care about and are ready to discuss. By offering ten chapters written by a slate of twenty contributors from a wide range of backgrounds, *Media Literacy for Justice* is one place to get started. — *Hannah Cole, Cal Poly Pomona*

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### Note

1. The Objective et al., “A More Specific Letter on Justice and Open Debate,” *The Objective*, July 10, 2020, [objectivejournalism.org/2020/07/a-more-specific-letter-on-justice-and-open-debate/](https://objectivejournalism.org/2020/07/a-more-specific-letter-on-justice-and-open-debate/).

***Embracing Change: Alternatives to Traditional Research Writing Assignments.*** Silke Higgins and Ngoc-Yen Tran, eds. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2022. 319 p. Paper, \$86.00 (978-0-8389-3766-2).



Amidst a competitive job market, a constantly evolving digital sphere of communication, and the many pressures (ecological, economic, and otherwise) facing students upon graduation, academic institutions are charged with the task of best preparing students to thrive. *Embracing Change: Alternatives to Traditional Research Writing Assignments* meets this challenge by inspiring information literacy instructors to consider their unique student populations and their corresponding needs; to be open-minded regarding resources available; and, above all, to be creative and nuanced in moving past written essays and reports toward assignments that better reflect student learning.