

Media Literacy Mini-Lesson #10

WHOSE VOICES ARE MISSING?

Whenever we consume news media, a key question to ask is whose voices are missing?

To figure out whose voices are missing from a news story, ask yourself:

Who is quoted in the article or featured in the picture?
Who is omitted, deliberately or not?

Why would a journalist or news editor choose to include certain individuals in a story and choose to leave other individuals out?



Who made the story?

Keep in mind the *points-of-view* that journalists or their editors may bring to a news story. Ask yourself if the story is *biased* in a certain direction. This will help you think critically about whose voices are included and whose voices are not included.

For example:

You've just come across a newspaper article about Native American mascots in sports. Take a look at the individuals featured or quoted in the story. Are they team managers or owners? Fans? Native American leaders or activists? What do the voices highlighted in the story tell you about the potential goals of that story?

The following source, "Indians Who Refuse to be Civilized," comes from the *St. Paul Globe* in 1903. It conveys regret over Native people in Minnesota who didn't want their children put in government schools.

The civilization of the Chippewa Indians who live in the northern woods of Minnesota is one of the greatest problems which confronts the interior department at Washington today. [...]

The schools founded by the government in their midst are not attended, the parents preferring to bring their children up in true Indian style. [...]

But aside from the pagan [non-Christian] Chippewas of the northern woods, the 10,000 Indians in Minnesota are rapidly becoming civilized, and many of the Indian children are receiving education almost as broad as is afforded to their palefaced brothers and sisters.

"Indians Who Refuse to be Civilized" *St. Paul Globe*, St. Paul, Minn. Dec. 20, 1903. Library of Congress

Whose perspective is included in the news clip? Whose is left out?

What do you think you might learn if the journalist had spoken to the Native people being described here?
