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News Literacy Lesson Plan/The Power of Information
Based on the News Literacy program at Stony Brook University
<https://digitalresource.center/>

Objective: To understand the risks journalists take to get us information, and to reflect on the importance of that information.

1. Recently, a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was found guilty in the killing of George Floyd during an arrest back in 2020. The arrest was captured on a cellphone video by 17-year-old Darnella Frazier and quickly went viral. That video, seen as an example of police brutality against black citizens, led to protests around the United States, and, eventually, the trial and conviction of the police officer. (If students are familiar with the trial, you might discuss how the trial would have been different without that video. If they are not familiar, you might explain how crucial the video was to public opinion and as evidence in the trial itself.)
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/20/us/darnella-frazier-video.html#:~:text=Darnella%20Frazier%2C%20who%20was%2017,charged%20in%20Mr.%20Floyd's%20death.>

Darnella Frazier was not officially acting as a journalist on that day, but her video shows the power of information, and the power of ordinary people who can share information over social media -- sometimes information that people in authority do not wish us to see. (If you have time, you might compare the video with the initial police report about the incident):

<https://www.politifact.com/article/2021/apr/22/what-first-police-statement-about-george-floyd-got/>

2. Eddy Binford-Ross was acting as a journalist when she covered the protests that erupted in Portland, Oregon, after George Floyd's death. (For background, see <https://www.koin.com/news/protests/portland-protests-what-happened-in-2020-whats-next-in-2021/> and <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/07/23/portland-protests-teenage-reporter/>

Eddy Binford-Ross was a reporter for the Clypian, a publication run by students at South Salem High School, in Salem, Oregon. Show students this interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRtvc3TP5Ww>

Ask: According to Eddy Binford-Ross, why is what she is doing important? Do you agree or disagree (explain)? Was she in danger? What risks did she take? Is this something

you would do? What are areas of *your* interest, where you crave information and appreciate - or would appreciate -- the work reporters are doing in gathering it? (Examples don't have to be life-threatening, but you could talk about other sacrifices reporters make, such as the sacrifice of time when they are working on a big story.)

3. Because information is powerful, there are many times when powerful people want to prevent information from being shared. The emperor Napoleon is quoted as saying, "Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets." Ask students why he would say that. Governments and others in power before and after Napoleon's time have worked to prevent the public from getting information.

The Committee to Protect journalists promotes press freedom and keeps track of journalists who are killed, attacked or jailed for doing their jobs. Ask students to browse the CPJ site (<https://cpj.org/>) and choose one item that interests them. If could be a graph or chart, the dangers faced by journalists in a country or region of the world, or the case of a particular reporter. Ask students to share their discoveries with the class and reflect on them. Discuss: Why do journalists put themselves at such risk? Is it important to us that they do so? Is there a danger in the public NOT being informed?