

## 'Lived experience': finally, a disability reporter who has a disability

**Level:** Advanced

### 1 Warmer

Choose the correct answers.

1. ABC is the public news network in **America** / **Australia**.
2. The public news broadcaster in the UK is the **BBC** / **NBC**.
3. CNN stands for **Cable** / **Canadian** News Network.
4. RAI is the national public broadcasting company of **Spain** / **Italy**.
5. The world's first television station was launched in 1928 in the **UK** / **USA**.

### 2 Key words

Find these key words in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. a noun meaning *a limit in society faced by people who have physical or mental differences* (para 1)
2. an adjective meaning *crying or feeling as if you want to cry* (para 1)
3. a noun meaning *the ability to understand how someone feels because you can imagine what it is like to be them* (para 1)
4. a noun meaning *a reading system for visually impaired people that uses small raised marks that they feel with their fingers* (para 2)
5. an adjective meaning *relating to the people who lived in a place for a very long time before other people came to live there* (para 5)
6. a noun meaning *the fact that very different people or things exist within a group or place* (para 5)
7. a verb meaning *watch something to check that it works or happens in the way that it should* (para 5)
8. a noun meaning *the way you think about something* (para 7)
9. a noun meaning *the origin of your parents or other older members of your family* (para 8)
10. an adjective meaning *very obvious* (para 9)

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***Nas Campanella says her blindness brings empathy to the job. The ABC hopes its diversity push makes the stories better too***

**Amanda Meade**

**2 January, 2021**

- 1 The ABC's national disability affairs reporter, Nas Campanella, says the stories she covers never cease to shock her. "In some ways, I'm not surprised that certain things are happening because they happened to me or people I know, but it never stops shocking me," Campanella says. "I'd be lying if I said it hadn't made me a little tearful at times but I think that's a good thing because it means I have still got that empathy. You need to be affected by these things if you're surrounded by them constantly."
- 2 Campanella is coming up to ten years at the national broadcaster and has been a newsreader for seven and a half years. She was born sighted but, at six months of age, blood vessels burst in the back of her eyes, which left her blind. She also has a muscle condition that means she is unable to read braille. She uses aural technology to read. "I was thrilled when I was asked to do the disability round because having a person with lived experience in that position meant there was a level of empathy and understanding of those issues that hadn't been there before," she says. "Any journalist here could cover these issues, and do it well, but obviously there's a level of understanding and contacts with the community that I had. I really wanted to change the way disability issues are portrayed and I wanted to give people with a disability the opportunity to tell their own stories."
- 3 Campanella's role as a television reporter gave viewers something they had never experienced: a person with a disability reporting on disability issues. "I have had an overwhelmingly positive reaction to being on television," Campanella says. "Most people are really excited, most people are really pleased that someone is on TV who has eyes that don't look like everyone else's."
- 4 After four years of unpaid work, Campanella says the ABC recruiters saw her simply as a person with potential. "I think for me that was what was great," she says. "I was seen for my skills, my experience and my dedication to the industry." She says reporting of people with a disability has been sensationalist: it's either a "pity" or "inspiration", and she wants to change that.
- 5 According to the latest available ABC figures, content makers with a disability make up 4.7% of staff at the ABC, content makers who are culturally and linguistically diverse make up 9.4% and indigenous content makers represent 2.8%. The ABC – and the media industry more widely – has a long way to go in representing diversity in all its forms, in particular ethnic diversity on the free-to-air TV networks, where presenters are disproportionately white compared with the wider population. The ABC news executive Gavin Fang has the task of making the ABC news division "look and sound like Australia" and oversees a number of programmes to improve diversity.
- 6 While flagship TV shows are hosted by white presenters, the diversity of reporters and presenters on ABC TV is increasing. Recently ABC News Breakfast changed its hosts and the journalist Iskhandar Razak, who was born in Singapore, joined Madeleine Morris as co-host. Fang says it's important to nurture talent like Razak to bring an end to the white domination of the key presenting roles.
- 7 Across the ABC, a talent management project team was formed to look at how the broadcaster can attract, develop and retain on-air talent. "We think having more diverse voices and perspectives in our journalism makes our stories better and makes them more relevant to the broadest audience," Fang said. "It's about being more representative. We have goals around workforce diversity and people with a disability."
- 8 During the Melbourne lockdown in 2020, audiences became familiar with the young reporter Elias Clure who was doing live reports on the ABC news channel. Of African-American descent, Clure grew up in Australia and started, like Campanella, as an ABC junior who wanted to change community attitudes. "I identify strongly with the ABC's values but I also believe strongly its programmes can be more diverse," Clure wrote. "My lived experience can offer a unique perspective."

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- 9 In June, 2020, Clure covered the Black Lives Matter protests in Melbourne and wrote about the impact on him and the racism he still experiences. “Constantly seeing white people report on issues of race is exhausting,” he says. “It’s not that white journalists can’t do a great job – they can – I just don’t think they can bring as comprehensive an understanding. It also exposes a glaring lack of diversity in news coverage in general, although the ABC is trying to address this with a Diversity Action Plan for its workforce and content to better reflect the entire Australian community.”

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### 3 Comprehension check

Answer the questions using the information in the text.

1. How does Nas Campanella read?
2. What gives her a better level of understanding than most reporters?
3. How have people reacted to her being on television?
4. What percentage of content makers at ABC are members of Australia's indigenous population?
5. When did TV audiences first become familiar with the reporter Elias Clure?
6. What events did Elias Clure cover in June, 2020?

### 4 Using key language

Complete the sentences using these nouns or noun phrases.

talent

TV shows

attitudes

news stories

racism

diversity

1. In many countries, people from minority ethnic backgrounds often experience \_\_\_\_\_.
2. People like Nas Campanella are working hard to change \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In Australia, the majority of presenters who host \_\_\_\_\_ are white.
4. Reporters often have to cover \_\_\_\_\_ in difficult circumstances.
5. Iskhandar Razak and Nas Campanella are examples of the ABC's programme to represent \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The ABC news executive Gavin Fang believes it is important to develop \_\_\_\_\_.

### 5 Discussion

Discuss these statements.

- All TV stations should employ a wider diversity of people.
- Reporters should only report on matters they have direct, personal experience of.
- It isn't important whether a reporter is from an ethnic minority or is someone with a disability. What is important is that they are a good reporter.

### 6 In your own words

Imagine that you have just moved to Australia and you would like to get a job as a reporter with ABC. Write a letter of application stating your skills and qualifications. Remember that ABC wants to be more culturally and linguistically diverse, so highlight any aspects of this that you believe you could contribute.