

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

Level: Intermediate

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

Complete the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

braille disability diversity empathy impact
indigenous issue sensationalist talent thrilled

1. A/an _____ is a limit in society faced by people who have physical or mental differences. (para 1)
2. _____ is a reading system for visually impaired people that uses small raised marks that they feel with their fingers. (para 1)
3. If you are _____, you are very pleased and excited. (para 2)
4. _____ is the ability to understand how someone feels because you can imagine what it is like to be them. (para 2)
5. A/an _____ is a subject that people discuss or argue about, especially one relating to society or politics. (para 2)
6. _____ reporting makes things seem more exciting or shocking than they really are. (para 4)
7. _____ people are the people who lived in a place for a very long time before other people came to live there. (para 5)
8. _____ is the fact that very different people exist within a group or place. (para 5)
9. A/an _____ is a natural ability for being good at a particular activity. (para 6)
10. A/an _____ is the effect or influence that something has. (para 8)

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2 January, 2021

- 1 Nas Campanella is the ABC's disability affairs reporter. She has worked for the national broadcaster for almost ten years and has been a newsreader for seven and a half years. She has been blind since she was six months old and also has a muscle condition that means she is unable to read braille. She uses aural technology to read.
- 2 "I was thrilled when I was asked to report on disability because having a person with experience doing that job meant there was an 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 wanted to change the way disability issues are reported 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 a very 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 look different."
- 4 After four years of unpaid work, Campanella says the ABC saw her simply as a person with potential. "That is great," she says. "I was seen for my skills and my experience." 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 figures, people with a disability make up 4.7% of staff at the ABC, people who are culturally and linguistically diverse make up 9.4% and indigenous staff represent 2.8%. The ABC – and the whole media industry – has a long way to go to represent diversity in all its forms, in particular ethnic diversity on TV networks where presenters are mostly white. The ABC news executive Gavin Fang has the task of making the ABC news division "look and sound like Australia".
- 6 While the main TV shows are hosted by white presenters, the diversity of reporters and presenters on ABC TV is increasing. Recently the journalist Iskhandar Razak, who was born in Singapore, became a co-host on ABC News Breakfast. Fang says it's important to develop talent like Razak to bring an end to the white domination of the key presenting roles. "We think having more diverse voices 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."
- 7 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 as an ABC junior who wanted to change attitudes. "I identify strongly with the ABC's values but I also believe strongly that its programmes can be more diverse," Clure said.
- 8 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 lack of diversity in news coverage in general, although the ABC is trying to address this with its Diversity Action Plan."

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3 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text? Correct the false statements.

1. Nas Campanella is blind so she reads braille.
2. People have reacted very positively to her work as a television reporter.
3. When she started work at the ABC, she didn't receive any pay.
4. Most people working at the ABC have a disability or are culturally and linguistically diverse.
5. Iskhandar Razak reported on the lockdown in Melbourne.
6. Elias Clure believes that white journalists can do a good job.

4 Using key language

Complete the sentences using these verbs.

change

develop

experience

host

make up

represent

1. In Australia, the majority of presenters who _____ television shows are white.
2. People like Nas Campanella are working hard to _____ people's attitudes.
3. The ABC news executive Gavin Fang believes it is important to _____ talent.
4. People with disabilities _____ just 4.7% of staff at the ABC.
5. In many countries, people from different ethnic backgrounds often _____ racism.
6. Iskhandar Razak and Nas Campanella are examples of the ABC's programme to _____ diversity.

5 Discussion

Discuss these statements.

- Diversity at TV companies should reflect society.
- Reporters should only report on issues that they have experienced themselves.
- It isn't important whether a reporter is from an ethnic minority or someone with a disability. What is important is that they are a good reporter.

6 In your own words

Use an internet search engine to find information about one of the three reporters mentioned in the article: Nas Campanella, Elias Clure or Iskhandar Razak. Find as much information as possible about their background, their work experience and their current position. Write a short summary describing the reporter you have chosen (150–200 words).