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Three Semester Review

Media plays a huge role in my life, and in our society. As a young person growing up in the 21st century, I don't know what I'd be doing without the concept of mass communications. We are at an interesting time in history where we have access to so much information, literally with the tap of a finger. At first, I was more of a passive consumer, who took information at face value. I wasn't necessarily very trusting of all media, but I was never really motivated to seek out new information regarding what I'd seen on the news or read on social media. Now, after participating in three semesters in Media Scholars, I am no longer a passive participant in media consumption. After watching the news, I may seek out articles from a different station on the same event. After seeing a tweet made by politicians or pop culture figures, I try to find other information that backs up their claims. After watching a movie, I consider whose perspective the narrative is from, whose voices are amplified, and whose were silenced. I also have a newfound understanding that the media does in fact have a responsibility to produce impactful and meaningful content that is truthful. In a world where fake news is becoming more and more widespread, we need to stay informed with correct information, as it not only can make our lives easier, but also directly save lives.

Within the last three semesters there have been many times where I employed a critical analysis of a media production. One that stands out to me in particular is when my friend and I were having an in depth discussion about the 2017 movie "Get Out", directed by Jordan Peele. I had to watch that movie for another course I was in, and it influenced me to start up a conversation with my friend. What made "Get Out" interesting to us is that it's a thriller film directed by a Black man, which isn't common in the genre. It's also a film that could be argued as targeted at Black audiences, which is also a bit unorthodox for the genre. We discussed that while the movie was an amazing creation, it had its flaws. We both greatly appreciated the narrative and storytelling, but we felt like something was missing: the perspective of Black women. In the entire film there is only one Black woman shown on screen, Georgina, and another mention of a Black woman, being the protagonist Chris's mother. The movie was a great way for Black people to be seen and represented, however as my friend and I are both Black women, we felt a bit of a disconnect to the story. While our racial identity was represented, our gender identity wasn't and we wished we could've had more Black female characters and women in general. The film was male dominated and if we could change one thing it would be for the film to add Black women in a more uplifting and positive way, instead of just being the house maid for a white family or the mother of a man. Black women struggle to have their voice heard in our society, and it would've been very impactful if there was a Black female character who was strong and stood in her own identity, rather than being attached to someone else's.

I've also had another experience where I've discussed with my friend about a misunderstanding of the role of the media in our lives. We actually have this conversation quite often, and it's about the role of influences, and their online duties. We question, "Is it the duty of social media influencers, and other people with large following online to be role models?" When

we say role models we mean something along the lines of people who are honest, and demonstrate tolerance of people from all kinds of backgrounds. Some people feel as though influencers are simply regular people who got "famous", and should live their life as they please, and document it for their followers as they please. Others feel like influencers have the responsibility to be a role model, and should lead by example. By the end of our discussion we came to a couple of conclusions. The first is that with great power comes great responsibility, and that if you do have a big platform, you should use it for good and watch what you say. While it would be ideal for influencers to be an exemplar, our second conclusion was that these people are human, and should be allowed room to make mistakes, or say the wrong thing. We cannot expect everyone with a platform to be a perfect person all the time, however we hope that people will recognize their power and the importance of sending a good message out to their followers. Personally, I do not idolize influencers or people of that kind, but I do believe that they should be held to a higher standard, as the words and images that they put out will be seen by myriads of people, which could have a profound impact.

Being a part of the Media Scholars community has given me the chance to contribute, by giving me a place where I feel like I'm actually cared for and heard. I truly enjoyed our colloquium discussions, and I was able to speak up in the majority of our class meetings. When we split into smaller groups in class, I was given even more of a chance to express myself with my peers. However, outside of classroom discussions I found it hard to contribute to the scholars community. During my freshman year I was very concerned with my courses, and spent most of my time doing assignments, instead of devoting a large amount of my time to the scholars program. A change that might have made this easier would be on my part, not the program. It's

my responsibility to reach out to my fellow classmates and figure out ways to better our community together.

As I move on with my collegiate career, there's one thing I learned that stands out to me that I feel will be relevant for the rest of my academic and professional years, and beyond. In our first year, we took a trip to the Newseum, and we had a lesson on how to "E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News". This activity was to help give us a method of critically analyzing news, so we could decide if it was trustworthy or not. The acronym E.S.C.A.P.E. stands for evidence, source, context, audience, purpose and execution. Using the escape method helps one get a better understanding of whatever media they are consuming. This also aids in comprehension of media for knowledge past the surface level. I know the E.S.C.A.P.E. method will be useful whether I'm doing graduate level research for data analytics, or just to help me better understand the message in an Instagram post on my timeline. Regardless of the type of media I'm consuming, it's crucial that I know who's putting it out there, and the truth behind the claims they're making.