

# **BRINGING HURRICANE KATRINA INTO THE CLASSROOM**

## **Media Literacy Lessons & Activities**



September 5, 2005

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## INTRODUCTION

It is Labor Day September 2005 – back-to-school season in most of the United States. But this past week, instead of tuning in to typical education stories, we witnessed the devastation created by Hurricane Katrina. For educators who want to help students analyze, understand, and cope with Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, the AMLA offers this basic set of media literacy activities and suggestions. It is not a comprehensive compendium, but rather, a starting place.

Let us know what you think. Share your experience teaching about media and Hurricane Katrina. Log on to the AMLA website – <http://www.AMLAinfo.org> - and post your comments, stories, and strategies on the Hurricane Katrina bulletin board.

## WHY BRING HURRICANE KATRINA INTO THE CLASSROOM?

Many of us alternated between outrage and tears as we watched the disaster relief services we had assumed our government would provide simply fail to materialize. Appallingly, citizens died because it took more than five days for some of them to receive water, food, and medication. It was impossible not to notice that most of the people in need of help were black and/or poor.

The response to Katrina has raised important questions about race, racism, socioeconomic class, and poverty in the United States. In addition, the situation has raised complex questions about security, environmental impact, funding priorities, and deployment of National Guard troops outside of the U.S. No doubt Hurricane Katrina will provoke dialogue around policy, budget, community, and responsibility for a long time to come.

## MEDIA LITERACY TEACHING TIPS

- ◆ Quality media literacy education requires knowledge about who creates media messages and why, and such analysis is always part of good media literacy practice.
- ◆ Education may include, but is not identical to, criticism; being an educator is not the same as being a watchdog or a critic.
- ◆ Quality media literacy education focuses on giving students the skills they need to access, analyze, and make media for themselves.
- ◆ It is nearly impossible to teach students to think for themselves while also assuming that they should or will agree with what you think, so media literacy education is non-partisan.
- ◆ The goal of media literacy education isn't to help students find bias. All human communication is biased, so nothing is gained if you stop when you realize there is a bias. Instead, media literacy education helps students learn to identify what the bias is and how that perspective might impact people's interpretation of what they see, hear, and read.
- ◆ To assess your own game plan, as you prepare your lesson(s) ask yourself the following questions:<sup>1</sup>
  1. Am I trying to tell the students what the message is, or am I giving students the skills to determine what they think the message(s) might be?
  2. Have I let students know that I am open to accepting their interpretation, as long as it is well substantiated, or have I conveyed the message that my interpretation is the only correct view?
  3. At the end of this lesson, are students likely to be more analytical or more cynical?

For more strategies on how to integrate media literacy into teaching, visit the website of AMLA organizational member, Project Look Sharp:

[http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp/resources\\_12principles.php](http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp/resources_12principles.php)

## GRADE LEVEL

The suggestions here are designed primarily for high school students, but most could also be adapted for use in middle schools and college classrooms.

## SUBJECT AREAS

Civics  
Critical Thinking  
Current Events  
Economics  
Global Studies  
Government  
Health

Journalism  
Media Studies  
Multicultural Education  
Political Science  
Social Studies  
Sociology

## QUICK LINKS

To find downloadable media to analyze:

[http://medialit.med.sc.edu/hurricane\\_katrina\\_news\\_photos.htm](http://medialit.med.sc.edu/hurricane_katrina_news_photos.htm) - The Media Literacy Clearinghouse, run by AMLA founding board member Frank Baker, has gathered an incredible array of resources for the study of media about Katrina, including news photos.

<http://www.newslink.org> - Links to newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations all over the world, sorted by media type and location.

<http://www.Newseum.org> - Features today's front pages of 46 newspapers from around the world, as well as archived pages from coverage of Katrina.

<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=68&aid=88304> - For comments from news editors about how they made their decisions, check the website of the Poynter Institute, a school for journalists that often provides online resources for exploring issues of ethics and excellence in journalism.

<http://www.alternet.org/story/24977/> - Transcription of WWL Radio interview with New Orleans Mayor, Ray Nagin, in which he pleads for reinforcements.

Background for assessing the credibility of assertions that Katrina's devastation of New Orleans was or was not predictable:

2004 article from *National Geographic* -

<http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0410/feature5/>

Transcript from 2002 report from the PBS series "NOW" -

[http://www.pbs.org/now/transcript/transcript\\_neworleans.html](http://www.pbs.org/now/transcript/transcript_neworleans.html)

"No one can say they didn't see this coming" opinion piece by journalist Sydney Blumenthal in Salon -

[http://www.salon.com/opinion/blumenthal/2005/08/31/disaster\\_preparation/index.html](http://www.salon.com/opinion/blumenthal/2005/08/31/disaster_preparation/index.html)

For questions about race and racism in the response to Katrina:

"What's Bush Got to Do With It?", a blog by AMLA Media Literate Media Award winner Van Jones - <http://search.huffingtonpost.com/mt/mt-search.cgi?MaxResults=25&search=%22Van+Jones%22>

Tim Wise, author of *White Like Me: Reflections on a Privileged Son* offers "A God with whom I am Not Familiar" - <http://www.counterpunch.org/wise09032005.html> - and "Of Disasters, Natural and Otherwise" - <http://www.lipmagazine.org/~timwise/Katrina1.html>

Commentary by journalist, essayist, and journalism professor, Leon Earl Wynter -

[http://www.theamericanrace.typepad.com/tar/2005/09/katrina\\_the\\_per.html](http://www.theamericanrace.typepad.com/tar/2005/09/katrina_the_per.html)

For examinations of journalistic practice:

"Katrina's Aftermath" from the *Los Angeles Times* -

[http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-media3sep03,1,5293837\\_story?coll=la-headlines-nation](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-media3sep03,1,5293837_story?coll=la-headlines-nation)

<http://www.onthemedialiteracy.org> - See "The Unmasked Questions"

## LESSONS and ACTIVITIES

### 1. BASIC ANALYSIS

Before examining any news story, introduce students to these key concepts<sup>2</sup> about media literacy:

1. All media are “constructed.”
2. People construct media using identifiable conventions of media “language.”
3. People interpret media messages through the lens of their own experience, so people may experience the same media message differently.
4. In addition to obvious or overt messages, media convey embedded values and points of view.
5. People who make media have specific goals and motives.

Using these concepts, help students analyze news reports by asking:

*Who is providing this report?*

Help students see all the people involved beyond the reporter doing the stand-up or the journalist named in the byline. Include camera and sound crews, news directors, copy editors, sponsors, etc.

*What techniques are they using to convey the facts?*

There are literally dozens of things you might highlight. To start with,

For TV:

- Have newscasts given the event a title, logo, and/or theme music? How might these influence how I think about what I see?
- Does it feel like I am watching a prime time drama or movie rather than a newscast? Why? How might that kind of presentation influence my thinking?
- When a reporter does a stand-up, what kinds of backgrounds do they use? Do people become part of the set, like props, or are they shown as individuals? How might the portrayal influence my attitudes towards those people?

For a newspaper or website:

- What placement does the story get? Which parts of the story are reported on the front page? What sizes are the headlines of various pieces?
- What is in photos accompanying the story? How do the photos draw my attention? Do they provide accurate illustrations for the specific points made in the story?

For any source:

- What sources are they using?
  - Which sources would be most credible for the information you want to know?
- Note: There is no perfect source of information in a disaster. Consider that people on the street have direct experience but no means of verifying things they hear from others. Government officials may not be on scene but may have radio contact, news footage, or views from aircraft.

*How might others interpret what they are seeing, hearing, or reading differently from me?*

- How might someone who lives in the neighborhood being shown react differently from someone who has never visited a Gulf Coast town?
- How might the reaction of a person who sees people like themselves (e.g., same race, same age, same gender, same sports team baseball cap, same wheelchair, etc.) differ from those who don't see people like themselves?

*In addition to the basic facts of the story, what values are being expressed?*

- Are reporters limiting themselves to relating the story, or are they adding personal or editorial commentary? If so, do you agree with the opinions they express? Why do you or don't you find those opinions convincing?
- How much space, time, or prominence is given to particular points of view? Who are labeled as "experts?" Who gets to speak for themselves and who is forced to rely on others to get their story across?
- Who benefits from this report?

*Why has this media outlet chosen to report this particular story?*

When disasters happen, people are often "glued" to the media. That makes for big ratings. So, in addition to students recognizing that news organizations report the story because it is their job as journalists to do so, help students recognize all the motives involved, including money. One way to help students see multiple motives is to ask: Why might this media outlet have chosen to report this particular story in this particular way?

*What has this report omitted?*

- Who might have a stake in this story? Who is not given voice in the story? What do you think they might say?
- Did interviewers ask the questions you would have asked? If not, what would you have asked and why? Did interviewers seek interviews with all the people you would want to hear from? If not, who else might have had valuable information or insight but was not interviewed?
- How important are pictures in determining what is covered? Are there stories that aren't being reported because they aren't easy to show or because no one has good footage?

## 2. MAKING COMPARISONS

Examples of media are provided below for your convenience, but to make the activity most relevant to your students, you may want to consider doing comparisons using your hometown newspaper or the media most accessed by your students.

### Domestic / International

To contrast domestic coverage with coverage elsewhere, compare media treatments of Hurricane Katrina in domestic news sources with coverage in international sources or with news of the tsunami. Ask students:

- List the similarities and differences you notice.
- What is the impact of the differences on the way you think about the issues raised in the stories? Would your opinion change if your only source of information was one side or the other?

For examples of current international news coverage:

<http://www.abyznewslinks.com/>

For examples of tsunami coverage, visit the Media Literacy Clearinghouse:

[http://medialit.med.sc.edu/media\\_Tsunami.htm](http://medialit.med.sc.edu/media_Tsunami.htm)

### Mainstream Media / Alternative Media

Compare mainstream media coverage with stories from alternative press sources. Ask students:

- Do the stories emphasize different facts? Are there parts of the story omitted from either of the articles? How does that impact the reader?
- Do the stories use different sources? How does this influence the story?
- Using cues from the article, can you describe the target audience? Why would news stories, which are supposed to report facts, be different when addressed to different audiences?
- Can you describe the point of view of the author or the political ideology of the publication by reading the article? If so, what evidence are you using to reach your conclusion?

For example, compare "Katrina Refugees Living in Pure Hell" from the *Chicago Defender*, a newspaper serving mostly black readers,

<http://www.chicagodefender.com/page/national.cfm?ArticleID=2115>, to "Thousands of Refugees Evacuated" from the conservative daily owned by Rev. Sun Yung Moon, *The Washington Times*, <http://www.washtimes.com/national/20050904-121654-4458r.htm>.

For a one-stop source of articles, blogs, and podcasts from the alternative, progressive press, visit <http://www.alternet.org>.

### Current / Historical

Compare depictions of current events with historical events. For example, many of the people portrayed in Katrina stories are being identified as poor (e.g., those too poor to evacuate). Compare these images with images of Appalachia from the 1964 War on Poverty. Ask students:

- What kinds of stereotypes are created, challenged, or reinforced by the depictions?
- What might media makers have hoped to accomplish by publishing or broadcasting these images?

Examples of historical images are included in Part 3 of the PBS documentary "The Appalachians" produced by Nashville Public Television (<http://www.npt.net>). Another source for materials on stereotyping in Appalachia is Appalshop (<http://www.appalshop.org>), which also provides a model for using media production to help people who otherwise have not had a public voice speak for themselves.

### Pro / Con

Compare opinion pieces about racial aspects of the response to Katrina. Ask students:

- Which piece do you find more persuasive and why?
- If you were part of the discussion, what would you say? What evidence would you give to back up your opinion?

Examples of opinion pieces include:

In "What's Bush Got to Do With It?", AMLA Media Literate Media Award winner Van Jones assigns responsibility to President Bush: "When the face of suffering is black, somehow our high standards for effective action and compassion begin to sag. The truth is, George W. Bush left these people behind a long time ago." The full text is available at:

<http://search.huffingtonpost.com/mt/mt-search.cgi?MaxResults=25&search=%22Van+Jones%22>

Note: This piece is written as part of a blog and students can also read responses posted to Jones.

In "Hurricanes, Hatred, and Hypocrisy," conservative commentator Oliver North defends President Bush -

<http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/onorth.htm>: "Extremists in today's Democratic Party are so angry even the horrific devastation and human suffering brought about by Hurricane Katrina have failed to produce any discernible detente in their vitriolic torrent."

### Internet / Traditional Journalism

In the digital age, people with Internet access are no longer exclusively dependent on the decisions of broadcasters or newspaper editors for information about events like Hurricane Katrina. You can help students think about the role the Internet plays by comparing Internet sources to newspaper articles or television or radio reports. Ask students:

- What sources of information have you accessed from the Internet? Where does each source get its information? Are fact-checkers reviewing that information?
- Can you separate opinion from fact?

To assess the impact of personal communication, ask students to compare the e-mail below, received by AMLA Board member Gilda Sheppard on September 1, 2005 at 4:12pm, with press releases from FEMA (available in the archives at <http://www.fema.gov>) or newscasts that students have seen.

*e-mail received: Thu 9/1/2005 4:12 PM*

*"I just heard from a friend who was able to get out of New Orleans. She wanted me to contact anyone in the Black media to let them know that there are folks dying and trapped in the 9th ward, and other Black areas. She says that the press has presented the news as if folks would not leave. She says that they did not get the news to leave, and most people did not have the transportation to leave. She found out about the evacuation when she saw a long line at the gas station and thought there might be a gas giveaway. That's when she heard that she had very little time to move quickly. The damn is breaking in more places, 80% of the city is under water. People are looting for basic needs, and they have no place to go, and no way to get anywhere. Thanks for helping to get the word out."*



Follow up to original message: The “friend” referred to in the message is independent filmmaker, Jada Harris. She is now helping out in Texas and has a crew shooting a documentary on Katrina’s aftermath from the perspective of the children. She can be reached at jadareneeATyahoo.com

Students can also compare official news stories with what is being reported on what many believe is the only blog being written and hosted from inside New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina’s approach: <http://mgno.com/>

To read more about this blog and how it has been maintained throughout the tragic events of the past week, visit Wired News:

<http://www.wired.com/news/hurricane/0,2904,68725,00.html>.

You might also ask students to compare topics discussed widely on the Internet with topics reported in mainstream media sources. Daypop.com lists the top 40 topics in the community of bloggers each day (<http://www.daypop.com/top/>). Do Google or Yahoo news searches on those topics to see how often they are covered by major media networks and newspapers. Ask students:

- Which topics are most frequent in each type of media? If you find differences, can you explain them? How might target audiences for each of the media sources differ?

### 3. EDITORIAL DECISION MAKING

One way to help students analyze news coverage and understand how it is constructed is to put students into the role of news director or newspaper editor – the person who makes key decisions about how the story will be covered. Below are some scenarios you might use.

For more ideas on how to teach about construction of news, download “The World in 22 Minutes: Constructing a TV News Line Up” -

[http://www.medialit.org/reading\\_room/pdf/MLK\\_classroomguide\\_1c.pdf](http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/pdf/MLK_classroomguide_1c.pdf)

#### Instructions

Before beginning the exercise, divide students into small groups. Tell each group that they must arrive at a consensus decision, as if they were one person. This kind of group work forces students to articulate the reasoning behind their opinions.

When you reconvene the full class, rather than focusing on the final decisions each group made, draw attention to how the groups came to their decisions. What kind of criteria were they using? What kinds of persuasion did they use to convince others in their group? Did everyone start with the same assumptions about what was important? If not, how did they differ?

Help students see that decision makers are people. The choices they make are influenced by their own personal perspectives, their professional experience, and the pressures of their jobs, as well as their beliefs about what makes “good” journalistic practice.

#### Scenarios

- You need to decide which reporter to send to cover the story in Mississippi. You have two reporters with experience in covering natural disasters. One of your reporters is from Biloxi and knows the Gulf Coast well. They have family who evacuated and are safe but whose homes were demolished by the storm. The other reporter has no personal ties to the region. Who would you choose to send and why?

In the follow-up discussion, be sure students consider how personal involvement might influence a report.

- Your photographer submits a photo of two black people carrying water and diapers that they had apparently just taken from the drug store behind them. Which of the following captions would you choose and why:
  - a. Two residents waded through chest-deep water after finding necessities from a local drug store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana.
  - b. Two residents walk through chest-deep water after looting a drug store in New Orleans.

As background for this scenario, you might have students look at two actual photos from Katrina coverage, one using a version of caption “a” and featuring white people, the other using a version of caption “b” and featuring black people. The photos, as well as explanations from the photographer and a statement from an editor who ordered his writers to stop using the word “looting” are available at

[http://medialit.med.sc.edu/compare\\_contrast.htm](http://medialit.med.sc.edu/compare_contrast.htm) and  
<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=45>

In the follow-up discussion, ask students to think about how they could accurately report a story in which most victims are black and/or poor without reinforcing negative stereotypes.

- Your crew submits footage of a woman with the body of her dead husband at her feet. His face is clearly visible. She says he died of dehydration because they have been stuck on a concrete overpass in the heat with no water for four days. Do you run the footage or not?

In the follow-up discussion, be sure students consider the ethics involved in showing dead bodies. When does the dignity of the individual outweigh the need to convey the gravity of a situation? Are there ways other than showing dead bodies to indicate that people are dying? Would those ways have as much impact in helping viewers feel the reality of the situation?

## 4. LOOKING AT LANGUAGE

### “Is This America?”

CNN reporter Sanjay Gupta said, “It doesn’t look like America; it looks like a Third World nation.” CBS television’s John Roberts compared it to Haiti. Ask students:

- What is the “it” in these statements? Can they give a detailed description?
- When people say that what they are seeing seems like another country, what kinds of assumptions are they making about what life is like in the United States? Are those assumptions justified? Are they true for everyone, or just some people? Are people who live in violent neighborhoods or in poverty as likely to say that this doesn’t seem like America as people who are economically and physically secure?
- When people say that what they are seeing seems like another country, what kinds of assumptions are they making about what life is like in other countries? Are they reinforcing stereotypes or “telling it like it is”?

For other examples of “it doesn’t look like America” statements, try doing a news search using the terms “Third World” and “Katrina.” Also check <http://www.cnn.com> for an interview with journalist Christiane Amanpour aired on September 4, 2005 titled “Is this America?”

### “Refugees”

Many reports about Hurricane Katrina described victims as “refugees.” For example, a September 3, 2005 *Washington Post* headline read: “Carnival Sending Three Ships for Refugees.” For thousands more examples, do a news search using Google or Yahoo and type in “Katrina” and “refugee.”

Some have objected to the use of the term “refugee” because they believe it obscures the fact that these people are U.S. citizens who are being ignored by their government, not stateless people who have no government responsible to protect them.

Ask students:

- What kinds of images does the term “refugee” evoke for you?
- Is “refugee” an appropriate descriptor for people displaced by Hurricane Katrina? Why or why not?

### “We” and “They”

As students listen to or read statements from press conferences, official announcements, or press releases, ask them to note the use of the words “we” or “us” and “they” or “them,” e.g., “We are all praying for you.” Ask:

- Is it clear who is included in the term “we”?
- Is the term being used accurately, or is it an overgeneralization?
- Are the terms used to divide groups of people from one another, i.e., to set up and “us” and “them” when one could reasonably see everyone involved as “us”?

One source for government statements is <http://www.c-span.org>. You might also look at official press releases from government agencies, available on the websites of those agencies (usually the initials of the agency.gov).

### Passive Voice

Ask students to look and listen for statements phrased in passive voice, e.g., “People at the Superdome have received water and food.” Ask:

- Can you tell who is doing the action, or does the use of passive voice obscure who is involved or responsible?
- Does passive voice imply that things “just happen” or does the story explain how things happened?

## 5. THE PRACTICE OF JOURNALISM

What are the responsibilities of a journalist in a disaster like Hurricane Katrina? Discuss one or more of the following to help students explore that question:

- AMLA Media Literate Media Award winner, *On the Media*, examines what kinds of information typical broadcast conventions provide (e.g., reporter doing stand-up in strong wind and rain) and what they miss. Listen to and discuss their September 2, 2005 radio broadcast, available online at: <http://www.onthemedialiteracy.org>. The broadcast also examines how coverage of Katrina's impact dealt with (or ignored) obvious questions of race and class.
- Should journalists remain neutral or is it appropriate for them to include their own opinions in their work? Ask students to evaluate the following examples of Katrina coverage. Are they advocacy journalism? What is the difference between advocacy and other types of journalism? Is advocacy journalism quality journalism? Why or why not?
  - a. MSNBC runs an on-screen clock indicating the time passed since Katrina struck. Accuracy in Media editor Cliff Kincaid criticized the practice saying, "MSNBC has made it quite clear that the purpose of this ticking clock is to try to blame the Bush administration for an alleged slow response."
  - b. CNN's commentator Jack Cafferty said, "No one, no one in government is doing a good job in handling one of the most atrocious and embarrassing and far-reaching calamitous things that has come along in this country in my lifetime."
  - c. On MSNBC, host and former Republican congressman Joe Scarborough called the situation in the Gulf Coast region "nothing short of a national disgrace."
  - d. Senior president of NBC News, Steve Capus said that reporters must not become part of the story, but it is appropriate for them to show emotion: "What other side of the story is there when Americans are dying in evacuation shelters?"

For more examples, see "Katrina's Aftermath" from the *Los Angeles Times*: <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-media3sep03,1,5293837.story?coll=la-headlines-nation>

- How polite should journalists be in interviews or when asking questions at a press conference? Ask students to consider whether or not reporters crossed the line in the exchanges described below:
  - a. On September 1, 2005's airing of "Nightline," ABC News' Ted Koppel questioned Federal Emergency Management Agency director Michael Brown about his inability to offer an accurate count of those seeking shelter at the New Orleans Convention Center: "Don't you guys watch television? Don't you guys listen to the radio? Our reporters have been reporting about it for more than just today."
  - b. On CNN, reporter Soledad O'Brien asked the FEMA Director Michael Brown: "How is it possible that we're getting better intel than you're getting? ... In Banda Aceh, in Indonesia, they got food dropped two days after the tsunami struck."

- c. On September 1, 2005, CNN's Anderson Cooper interrupted Democratic Sen. Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, who was thanking leaders and praising the emergency aid bill Congress was about to pass: "Excuse me, Senator, I'm sorry for interrupting. I haven't heard that, because, for the last four days, I've been seeing dead bodies in the streets here in Mississippi, and to listen to politicians thanking each other and complimenting each other, you know, I got to tell you, there are a lot of people here who are very upset, and very angry, and very frustrated.... It kind of cuts them the wrong way because literally there was a body on the streets of this town yesterday being eaten by rats."
- d. Marcy McGinnis, senior vice president of CBS News, said that she could not remember another disaster in which there was such a disconnect between what the government said and what reporters saw. "It is part of our job to question them and to say, 'How can you say that, when we see something else with our own eyes?'"
- How involved should a reporter get in a story when the people they are reporting on need help? When do the ethics of being a human being override the need to be a neutral observer or to file a report on time? Ask students to consider whether or not the following cross the line into poor journalistic practice:
    - a. NBC news correspondent Hoda Kotb took down phone numbers and made phone calls from her satellite phone to relatives of people she interviewed.
    - b. A news crew on its way back to Baton Rouge to file story is flagged down by a group of people asking for a ride. For fear of being swamped with requests, they don't stop.
    - c. A small group of local citizens is struggling to help a woman in a wheelchair into the back of a dump truck that is heading to dry ground. After shooting footage of their failing struggle, the camera crew stops to help.
    - d. A clearly ill woman comes up to a reporter and asks where she is supposed to go for help. The reporter stops recording her stand-up to take the woman to a police officer and explain the woman's story. The police officer helps the woman to the front of the line boarding an evacuation bus.

## 6. TAKING ACTION

Looking at media critically can produce anger, frustration, or even a sense of helplessness. One way to help students move past those feelings is to help them act on what they have learned. Obviously, actions that provide aid to victims are appropriate, but those don't necessarily involve media literacy. Here are a few suggestions that do involve media literacy:

- Do an exercise on Internet credibility and have students apply what they have learned to assess websites collecting donations for Hurricane Katrina survivors. Encourage them to send lists of phony sites to local newspapers, listservs, blogs, etc., as well as to post information in school where classmates can access it.
- Help students identify news sources they think are doing a good job as well as those that are not. Have them post the results of their analysis on the school or classroom website so that other members of the community can benefit from what the students have learned.
- Facilitate student media production that helps survivors tell their own stories and/or that helps students share their opinions and experiences.
- Develop lists of questions that you want reporters to ask the people they interview. Send those questions to media outlets. Contact information is available for cable stations and companies from Cable in the Classroom at <http://www.ciconline.org/aboutcic/cicmembercompanies/default.htm>. Contact for other media outlets is available at <http://www.newslink.org>.
- Encourage students to write a letter to their Senators and Congressional Representatives about what they have learned from their media literacy education activities and what they want their representatives to do.
- Have students write and submit or post op/ed pieces on topics related to Hurricane Katrina (e.g., the role of racism, the job performance of FEMA Director Michael Brown or other local, state, or federal officials, the responsibility of other Americans to provide assistance, etc.)
- Track how long coverage continues relative to the continuation of problems on the ground. If coverage of issues important to students wanes, create public events or submit letters to the editor to revive the discussion.
- Compare standard public health recommendations about things like dehydration or avoiding potential water-borne diseases with statements made by public officials. Find ways to make sure your community has basic health and emergency preparedness information. One source for public health information is the Center for Disease Control, <http://www.cdc.gov>.
- In New Orleans, many poor residents did not get the message to evacuate. Do a media-access assessment of your community. In the event of an emergency, what kinds of media would have to be used to reach *everybody* and not just those with cable or satellite TV or Internet access? Help your community emergency response agencies develop a critical information media plan that would reach everyone.

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These media literacy activities were prepared by Dr. Faith Rogow with input from the AMLA Board of Directors

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the Five Core Concepts from the Center for Media Literacy – <http://www.medialit.org>