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“Using the Power of the Media for Good”

Is there any doubt that the media is immensely powerful? It possesses the ability to sway opinion and engender action? If you question the power of the media, then think again.

Here are a few recent news stories concerning the media’s power:

- The recent release of Britney Spears from a conservatorship following a Netflix documentary on the abuse that she endured under the arrangement.¹
- The recent exoneration of two men accused and convicted of killing Malcolm X following a very important Netflix documentary on the topic.²
- *Bloomberg.com*’s recent article that called upon media mogul Rupert

Murdoch to use his influence to redirect Donald Trump’s antics; claiming that Murdoch has the power to do so.³

If these three stories are not convincing, then consider that the economic activity of media industries is captured in the US statistical system under North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) code 51, which is labeled “Information.” According to the US Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA, the US national accountant), the Information industry accounted for USD 2.0 trillion in gross output (~total receipts) in 2020 (5.5 percent of total gross output for the nation), and accounted for USD 1.2 trillion in value added (the contribution to gross domestic product (GDP); 5.6 percent of total GDP).⁴

¹ Anastasia Tsioulcas, (2021), “Britney Spears’ conservatorship has finally ended,” NPR.org, November 12; <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/12/1054860726/britney-spears-conservatorship-ended#:~:text=Britney%20Spears'%20conservatorship%20has%20finally%20ended%20%3A%20NPR&text=Britney%20Spears'%20conservatorship%20has%20finally%20ended%20After%2013%20years%20living,released%20from%20her%20conservatorship%20Friday> (Ret 112221).

² Ashley Southhall and Jonah Bromwich, (2021), “2 Men Convicted of Killing Malcolm X Will Be Exonerated After Decades,” *The New York Times*,

November 17; <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/nyregion/malcolm-x-killing-exonerated.html> (Ret. 112221).

³ Timothy O’Brien, (2021), “Murdoch Has the Power If He Wants Trump to Move On,” *Bloomberg.com*, November 18; <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-11-18/murdoch-has-the-power-if-he-wants-trump-to-move-on> (Ret. 111921).

⁴ The gross output and value added estimates can be obtained from the following BEA webpage; https://apps.bea.gov/iTable/index_industry_gdpIndy.cfm (Ret. 112221).

As casual observers, we know that media drives what we see and know each day and guides what we consume individually and collectively. Media is at the heart of our existence.

Consequently, we know that the media can be, and is, used to promote and motivate positive and negative outcomes in the US and the global society. When media motivates negative outcomes, then someone or some group in the society suffers.

In today's world, when an adverse force exists in the society, say COVID-19, then there is an outcry to address that force: i.e., everyone should get inoculated/immunized. Why is not a similar approach taken with respect to the media?

Much of the media employs public airwaves, the Internet, and government regulated channels to present its content and advertisement. If we find—and we have—that the media is serving as a negative force, then why can't we demand a halt to that force—at a minimum, we should demand that efforts be made to alter the force?

Of course, there is the issue of the First Amendment's "freedom of expression."

However, when we know with certainty that a media force is causing harm to a particular group in society—e.g., the harm caused to Black Americans by adverse stereotypical media images—then that group should (must) be able to cry foul and count on all responsible parties to mandate and enforce change. Otherwise, in the end, the entire society suffers.

For example, economists are quick to identify the trillions of dollars in income, output, and wealth that are lost each year because of discrimination, which results to a considerable extent from the adverse stereotypical media images of Black Americans.⁵

Therefore, because the media is an immensely powerful and effective tool, we should each commit to supporting efforts to make media a tool for good.

When we take such action, then we can be assured that all will benefit.

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⁵ See Dana Peterson and Catherine Mann, (2020), *Closing the Racial Inequality Gaps: The Economic Cost of Black Inequality in the US*, Citi GPS: Global

Perspectives & Solutions (September); <https://www.citivelocity.com/citigps/closing-the-racial-inequality-gaps/> (Ret. 100120).