LmunA 2023

Research report

Forum: General Assembly Third Committee

Issue: Addressing cultural stereotypes and
                    misrepresentations in the media and news
                    broadcasts

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Introduction

In our current global landscape the infleunce of news broadcasting and the media is undeniably far-reaching and profound. It is one of the largest factors on which personal opinions are build and societal expectations are set. However, within this sphere of substantial influence, a persistent and concerning issue endures. The continuation of cultural stereotypes and misrepresentations.

These stereotypes and misrepresentations can be detrimental to people's lives and carreers. Even if they are not meant to be so. We are to succome to the fact that not everyone is the same even if we strive for equality. That is why stereotypes are unaccapteble in a modern society.

These biases, often subtle or apparant, distort the delicate fabric of cultural diversity by making prejudices and polarising our society further. Addressing this challenge is a fundamental imperative in our pursuit of a world characterized by fairness, inclusivity, and mutual understanding.

During this conference we shall navigate the intricate terrain of cultural stereotypes and misrepresentations within media and news broadcasts. Untagling their dentrimental implications and advocating for informed action to be taken.

Definitions of key terms

Cultural Stereotypes
Simplified and often inaccurate beliefs or generalizations about a particular cultural group that are perpetuated and reinforced through various forms of media.

Misrepresentations
Inaccurate or distorted portrayals of individuals or groups in the media, deviating from the true characteristics, values, or behaviors of the represented culture.

Bias
Prejudiced or one-sided perspectives that affect how information is presented, interpreted, or conveyed, often influenced by personal beliefs, societal norms, or organisational interests.

Diversity
The range of differences and variations among individuals or groups based on various characteristics, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, and cultural backgrounds.

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Inclusivity

The practice of actively involving and respecting diverse perspectives, cultures, and identities, promoting equal participation and representation without discrimination.

Ethical Journalism

Reporting and storytelling in the media that adheres to established ethical principles, including accuracy, fairness, integrity, and respect for the rights and dignity of individuals and communities.

General overview

The issue of addressing cultural stereotypes and misrepresentations in the media and news broadcasts is a pressing concern in today's interconnected world. Media, as a powerful tool of information dissemination and opinion formation, plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions. However, it has been observed that media often perpetuates stereotypes and misrepresents cultures, reinforcing biases and prejudices. These stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic status, and other demographic factors. Such misrepresentations not only misinform but also contribute to discrimination, marginalization, and social unrest.

How many times have you seen a white person paint their face to be another race as a "costume"? How about a model wearing a Native American headdress? These are examples of cultural appropriation, an issue our society often pushes to the side. Cultural appropriation is the misrepresentation of a minority group by a dominant culture. It occurs in media, music, Hollywood, and everyday life. The cultures which are mistreated are ones that have been abused in the past as well. This distortion of culture is often harmful and offensive, and it a problem that needs a solution.

In modern society, culture is an issue that is debated often, as people argue whether the misrepresentation of minorities in media is really a problem that needs to be addressed because many do not realize the harm of it. Erich Hatala Matthes, professor of moral philosophy, says, "Cultural appropriation can often seem morally problematic. When the abstract schemas above are filled in with details from actual events, we often find misrepresentation, misuse, and theft of the stories, styles, and material heritage of people who have been historically dominated and remain socially marginalized"

The impact of these stereotypes and misrepresentations is profound, affecting individuals, communities, and society at large. They contribute to the perpetuation of discriminatory attitudes and behaviors, hindering social progress and reinforcing inequalities. It is essential to recognize the damaging consequences of these misrepresentations and work towards rectifying them.

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Major parties involved

Media Organizations and Journalists

Media organizations and journalists play a significant role in shaping narratives and perceptions through their content. They are responsible for ensuring that their reporting is free from cultural stereotypes and misrepresentations.

Government and Regulatory Bodies

Governments and regulatory bodies oversee and regulate media practices within their jurisdictions, ensuring compliance with laws and ethical guidelines.

Civil Society and Advocacy Groups

Civil society organizations and advocacy groups actively work to raise awareness about cultural stereotypes, campaign against misrepresentations, and advocate for responsible media practices.

Educational Institutions

Educational institutions play a critical role in fostering media literacy and educating students on recognizing and challenging cultural stereotypes and misrepresentations in the media.

Advertisers and Sponsors

Advertisers and sponsors fund media outlets and have a stake in the content produced. They can influence media practices by supporting platforms that prioritize responsible representation and diversity.

Timeline of Key Events

1920s-1930s   Rise of mass media: Radio and cinema begin to disseminate stereotypes and representations, often reinforcing cultural biases.

1960s-1970s   Civil Rights Movement and Cultural Shifts: Increased awareness and activism against racial and cultural stereotypes in media.

1978   Formation of the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) in the United States, aiming to combat stereotypes against the Hispanic community.

1990s-2000s   Emergence of the Internet and Global Media: Challenges of combating stereotypes become more complex as the internet and globalization impact the spread of stereotypes.

2001   UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity: Emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity and calls for efforts to counter stereotypes.

2010s   Heightened Awareness and Advocacy: Increased focus on addressing stereotypes and misrepresentations due to the rise of social media and online activism.
2014   The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) launches the "PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival" to challenge stereotypes and promote diversity through youth-created videos.
2020   Continued Activism and Media Scrutiny: Ongoing efforts by various organizations and individuals to combat stereotypes and promote accurate and inclusive representation in the media.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The United Nations have never in their history documented discussing the topic 'Addressing cultural stereotypes and misrepresentations in the media and news broadcasts'. Furthermore, they have not discussed anything regarding misrepresentations of groups of people, only misrepresentation in a courtroom. Besides the previous they also have not discussed anything regarding stereotypes, cultural or not, in the media and news broadcasts.

There are however documents regarding the elimination or taking measures against cultural stereotypes. They will not be discussed during the conference, however they are an interesting read and a good reference:

- Identification and elimination of sex stereotypes in and from school textbooks, 1983. (UNESCO/ED-84/WS/31)

- Protection of migrants, 20 December 2004. (A/RES/59/194)

- Combating defamation of religions, 18 December 2008. (A/RES/63/171)

- Combating defamation of religions, 18 December 2009. (A/RES/64/156)

- Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, 19 June 2012. (A/HRC/20/NGO/101)

Possible solutions

Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing media literacy education, diversity in media representation, responsible journalism, self-regulation within the media

industry, and international collaboration to establish guidelines and standards. Media literacy programs are crucial in educating the public about recognizing and challenging stereotypes. Encouraging diverse representation within media organizations helps in presenting a more accurate and balanced portrayal of cultures. Responsible journalism involves adhering to ethical guidelines that prevent the dissemination of biased information. Self-regulation within the media industry can ensure responsible and fair reporting, respecting cultural diversity. Additionally, international cooperation is vital to create a global understanding and consensus on addressing this issue.

Further reading

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