

**AIDM7420 News and Feature Writing for Digital Media**  
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Spot News #1: Pretend that you have just attended one of the TED Talks we watched in class and write a 500-600 word hard news story for publication in the next day's newspaper. Please make sure to follow the inverted pyramid model, follow journalistic conventions we've learned so far, and think about what information you need to include.

**The Danger of a Single Story: How Incomplete Narratives Shape Stereotypes**

Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in a TED talk delivered on 21 July 2009, shared the profound impact that single stories have on shaping our perceptions, reinforcing stereotypes, and breeding misconceptions about different cultures.

“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story,” said Adichie.

She pointed out how literature and media today often focus narrowly on a single narrative about countries, cultures, or people, which may lead to skewed perceptions, fostering ignorance, misunderstanding, and bias among individuals, countries, and cultures.

Reflecting on her own experiences, Adichie shared how the negative portrayal of Mexican immigrants in American media — as individuals who exploit the healthcare system, illegally cross the border, and are frequently arrested — influenced her perceptions. Upon visiting Mexico, she discovered the reality was far from the harmful stereotypes propagated by the media. This experience led her to realize that stereotypes stem from incomplete information and that a single narrative in the media can lead to misunderstandings and a lack of mutual respect among individuals from different backgrounds.

Adichie also discussed the role of power in shaping narratives, defining it as 'the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive

story of that person.' She pointed out that the prevailing stories are often told by those in positions of power, which can overshadow or silence alternative voices, thus perpetuating stereotypes and fostering prejudice.

Highlighting the damaging effects of single stories, Adichie said, "The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar."

Growing up in Eastern Nigeria, Adichie was initially exposed solely to Western literature, where all the characters in the books were foreigners. It led her to adopt a narrow view of the world. The turning point came with her discovery of African literature, which offered a reflection of her own identity and led to a significant shift in her perception of literature.

"I realized that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognized," Adichie recalled.

When Adichie moved to the United States for college, she encountered a roommate who held the belief that all Africans came from backgrounds of poverty and struggle—an impression frequently portrayed in Western media and literature. This experience highlighted the negative impact single narratives can have in shaping perceptions across different cultures.

While admitting the severe challenges faced by African countries, including failed infrastructure and governance issues, Adichie also shared the stories of resilient and determined individuals striving to make their countries better. She emphasized the importance of embracing multiple stories from diverse perspectives to foster a more nuanced, respectful, and comprehensive understanding of the world.

"Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity," Adichie concluded.