

# Digital Colorism: How AI Headshot Generators Are Failing Dark-Skinned Users



Exploring the troubling prevalence of Digital Colorism (including Texturism, Featurism, Ageism and Sizeism) in AI-powered portrait/ headshot generators and strategies to promote inclusive representation.



► 02:37

 YouTube

## Digital Colorism

How AI Headshot Generators Are Failing Dark-Skinned Users



# What is Digital Colorism.com?

Digital Colorism.com provides a framework to evaluate AI generators' performance through the lens of historical and societal implicit biases, focusing on how skin tone, hair texture, facial features, age representation, and body size are often equated with beauty, success, and competence.

The framework includes six key discriminatory factors to measure the performance of AI generators: Colorism, Texturism, Featurism, Ageism, Sizeism, and Accessibility.

# How does Digital Colorism manifest?

## Unfair Skin Tone Bias

Digital Colorism refers to the systematic preference for lighter skin tones in AI-generated portraits and images. Texturism, Featurism, Ageism and Sizeism are other discriminatory factors applied in AI-generated portraits.

## Perpetuating Harmful Stereotypes

These biases reinforces damaging societal notions that equate light skin, straight hair, European features (i.e. pointy nose), younger appearance and skinnier bodies, with **beauty, success, and competence.**

## Exclusion of Diversity

AI portrait generators often fail to accurately represent the full spectrum of human skin tones and features and significantly alter the **user experiences.**

## Lack of Accountability

The opaque nature of AI systems makes it challenging to identify and address the root causes of this bias. This bias is not new but keeps on prevailing across AI technology.

# The Impact of Biased AI Portrait Generators

## Psychological Harm

Exposure to AI-generated portraits that reinforce colorist, texturist, featurist, ageist and seizeist beauty standards can negatively impact self-esteem, and mental health (depression, identity struggles, inferiority complex), especially for marginalized communities and younger audience.

## Perpetuating Discrimination

The normalization of digital colorism in AI art and technology can contribute to the ongoing marginalization, exclusion and erasure of individuals with darker skin tones.

## Missed Opportunities

The lack of diverse representation in AI-generated headshots/portraits limits the creative potential and inclusivity of this emerging technology. There are more than 7.8 billion Black/Afro-descendants in the world that are not adequately served by AI tools today.

# Examining the Underlying Causes

## Biased Training Data

AI portrait generators are trained on datasets that often lack diversity, leading to the perpetuation of biased beauty standards.

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## Societal Prejudice

The deep-rooted colorism and racism present in many cultures are reflected in the outputs of these AI systems.

## Algorithmic Flaws

The design and implementation of the AI models themselves can contain inherent biases that prioritize certain skin tones, hair textures, features, body sizes and age over others.

# Digital Colorism: 6 Factors for Assessing AI Generator Performance:



## Colorism

Evaluates the accuracy of skin tone representation



## Texturism

Assesses the availability and variety of Black/Afro hairstyles



## Featurism

Measures how closely facial features match the original



## Ageism

Looks at how accurately the age is represented



## Sizeism

Evaluates the accuracy and variety of body size representation



## Accessibility

Considers whether the tool is free or require payment as an indicator of accessibility for Everyone

# Airbrush - Digital Colorism Assessment

 AirBrush <https://airbrush.com/>



Created by AirBrush

Created by AirBrush

Created by AirBrush

	<b>Colorism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Texturism</b>	Medium
	<b>Featurism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Ageism</b>	Good
	<b>Sizeism</b>	Bad
	<b>Accessibility</b>	Paid

# Dr. Headshot - Digital Colorism Assessment



<https://drheadshot.com/>



	<b>Colorism</b>	<b>Bad</b>
	<b>Texturism</b>	<b>Bad</b>
	<b>Featurism</b>	<b>Medium</b>
	<b>Ageism</b>	<b>Medium</b>
	<b>Sizeism</b>	<b>Good</b>
	<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Free</b>

# Supawork.ai - Digital Colorism Assessment



<https://supawork.ai/>



The image shows three women of different skin tones standing side-by-side against a light gray background. The woman on the left has dark curly hair and is wearing a light gray blazer over a white top. The woman in the center has long straight hair and is wearing a cream-colored blazer over a white top. The woman on the right has curly hair and is wearing a dark gray blazer over a white top.

 Colorism	Bad
 Texturism	Medium
 Featurism	Medium
 Ageism	Good
 Sizeism	Good
 Accessibility	Free

# Vidnoz - Digital Colorism Assessment



<https://www.vidnoz.com/>



 Colorism	Bad
 Texturism	Bad
 Featurism	Bad
 Ageism	Bad
 Sizeism	Bad
 Accessibility	Free

# Dreamwave - Digital Colorism Assessment

dreamwave

<https://www.dreamwave.ai/>



	<b>Colorism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Texturism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Featurism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Ageism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Sizeism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Accessibility</b>	Paid

# Black Headshots - Digital Colorism Assessment



<https://www.blackheadshots.com/>



	<b>Colorism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Texturism</b>	Good
	<b>Featurism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Ageism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Sizeism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Accessibility</b>	Paid

# Profile Bakery - Digital Colorism Assessment

PROFILE  
BAKERY

<https://www.profilebakery.com/>



 Colorism	Excellent
 Texturism	Good
 Featurism	Medium
 Ageism	Excellent
 Sizeism	Good
 Accessibility	Paid

# Nova Headshot - Digital Colorism Assessment



**Nova Headshot**

<https://www.novaheadshot.com/>



	<b>Colorism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Texturism</b>	Good
	<b>Featurism</b>	Good
	<b>Ageism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Sizeism</b>	Excellent
	<b>Accessibility</b>	Paid

# Digital Colorism: Performance Assessment Report

	Colorism	Texturism	Featurism	Ageism	Sizeism	Accessibility
Airbrush	Excellent	Medium	Excellent	Good	Bad	Paid
<u>Dr.Headshot</u>	Bad	Bad	Medium	Medium	Good	Free
Supawork.ai	Bad	Medium	Medium	Good	Good	Free
<u>Vidnoz</u>	Bad	Bad	Bad	Bad	Bad	Free
<u>Dreamwave</u>	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Paid
Black Headshots	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Paid
Profile Bakery	Excellent	Good	Medium	Excellent	Good	Paid
Nova Headshot	Excellent	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Paid

# Strategies for Combating Digital Colorism

## 1 Diversify Training Data

Ensure AI portrait generators are trained on more inclusive and representative datasets that reflect the full spectrum of human diversity.

## 3 Promote Transparency

Increase the transparency of AI development processes and empower users to understand and challenge biased outputs.

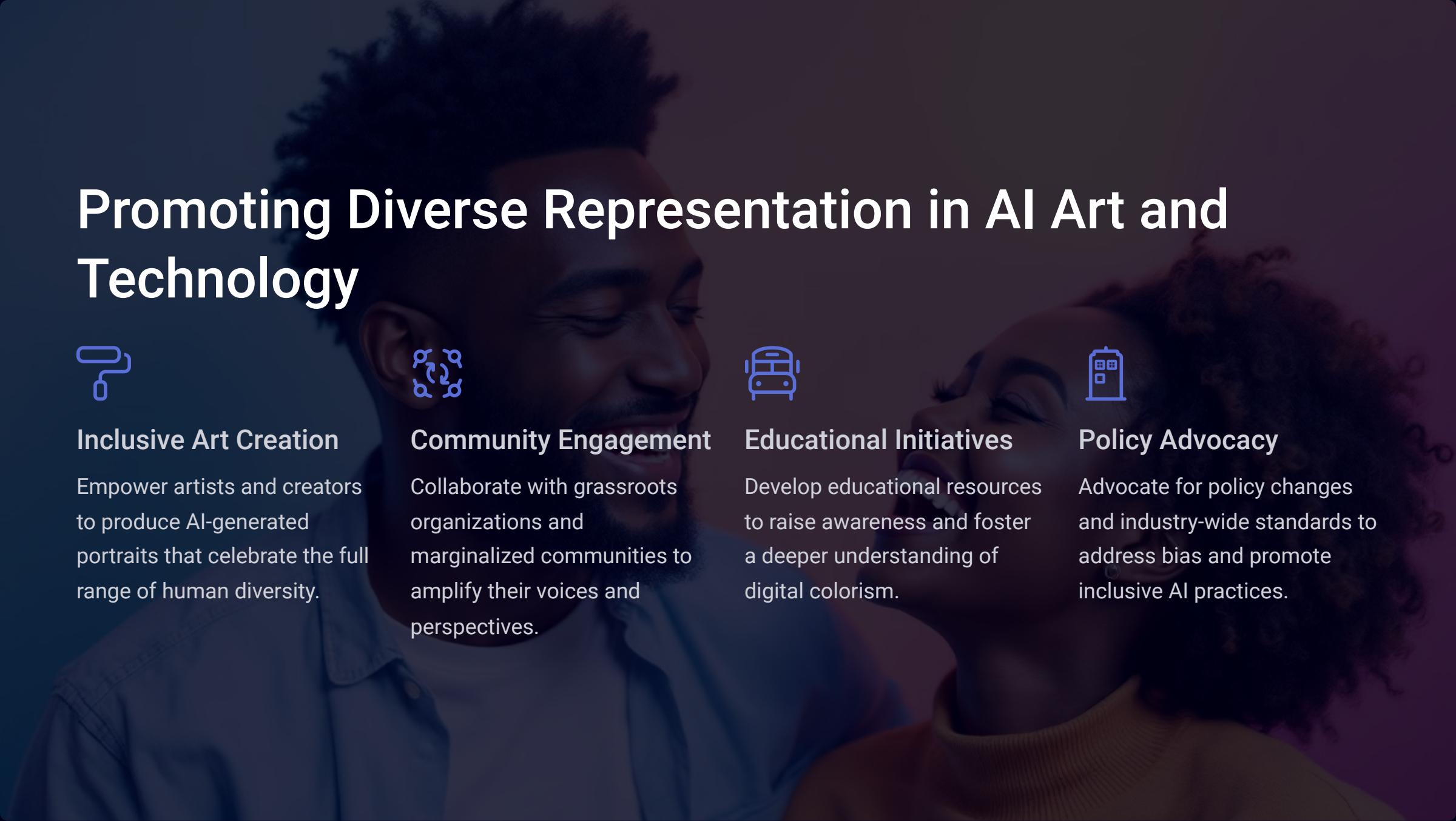
## 2 Implement Algorithmic Audits

Regularly audit the AI models for biases and make necessary adjustments to mitigate the perpetuation of digital colorism.

## 4 Collaborate with Stakeholders

Engage with diverse communities, experts, and policymakers to develop comprehensive solutions to address digital colorism.

# Promoting Diverse Representation in AI Art and Technology



## Inclusive Art Creation

Empower artists and creators to produce AI-generated portraits that celebrate the full range of human diversity.



## Community Engagement

Collaborate with grassroots organizations and marginalized communities to amplify their voices and perspectives.



## Educational Initiatives

Develop educational resources to raise awareness and foster a deeper understanding of digital colorism.



## Policy Advocacy

Advocate for policy changes and industry-wide standards to address bias and promote inclusive AI practices.

# Empowering Users with Inclusive Tools



## User-Controlled Customization

Allowing users to adjust skin tones, facial features, and hair textures in a transparent way puts more control in the hands of the user.



## Bias Detection and Feedback Mechanism

Empower users by integrating a feedback system within the generator.



## Cultural Sensitivity and Context

Portrait generators can incorporate cultural sensitivity by offering context-aware filters or choices.



## Inclusive Design and Testing

Involve diverse groups in the design, testing, and development of these AI tools.

# Conclusion and Call to Action

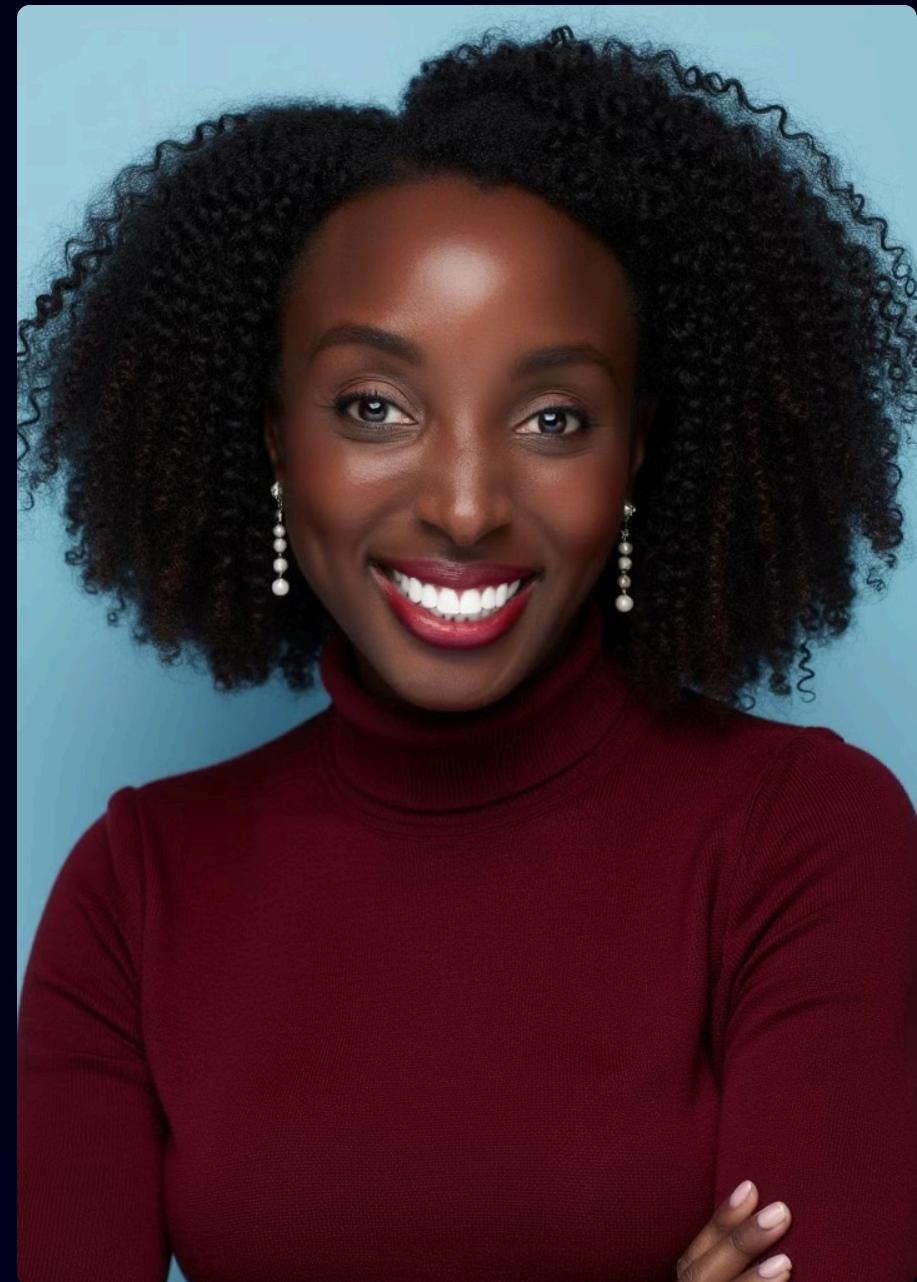
By addressing digital colorism in AI headshot and portrait generators, we can foster a more inclusive and equitable future for digital representations through art and technology. Join us in this important mission to create a world where all are equally represented, celebrated and not erased.

Christelle Mombo-Zigah,  
Founder of Digitalcolorism.com

[Assess](#)

[Connect](#)

[Amplify](#)





# Hi, I'm Christelle, here is my bio:

## Early Life and Education

Born and raised in France to Congolese parents, Christelle Mombo-Zigah is a French American Black woman currently living in Silicon Valley. She holds a master's degree in International Economics from La Sorbonne University and is a graduate of Stanford GSB's LEAD Executive program.

## Professional Role

Currently, she serves as the Global Renewals Strategy and Planning Leader for AppDynamics, a Cisco company.

## Career Experience

With 17 years of global business experience and a decade in the tech industry, Christelle has worked across multiple sectors, including beauty, sustainability, banking, and technology. In these industries, she has held various roles in global sales, business development, M&A integration, customer success, and renewals. Her superpower lies in helping international technology companies drive growth, transformation, and innovation.

## Recognition and Accomplishments

Christelle is a futurist, an ambidextrous leader, and a problem-solver who believes in the power of technology to create a better world for Everyone. She was recognized as a Top 100 Futurists of African descent by the MIPAD, a category that honors individuals at the forefront of technological advancement who innovate in fields such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and finance, shaping the future of technology and society.

## Advocacy and Community Involvement

Her commitment to human-centered experiences and sustainability led her to join the Responsible AI committee at Cisco where she advocated for intersectionality and inclusiveness to fight against biases. She emphasizes that "making AI accessible to everyone and implementing policies and regulations in both public and private sectors is imperative to prevent the harmful effects of discriminatory historical data and biased algorithms at scale."

## Entrepreneurial Ventures

Driven by her own experiences with digital colorism, Christelle founded DigitalColorism.com, an AI headshot generator assessment that evaluates the performance of these tools based on discriminatory factors such as Colorism, Texturism, Featurism, Ageism, and Sizeism, along with service Accessibility (free versus paid).

## Linguistic Skills and Cultural Appreciation

Passionate about history and linguistics, Christelle is fluent in French, English, and Spanish, with basic knowledge in Swedish and Arabic, and is currently learning Portuguese. She views language as a unifying force and a bridge to understanding different cultures. Additionally, she appreciates her Kongo heritage and its rich lineage across the Americas and the Caribbean.

## Authorial Pursuits

A self-published author of three children's books, Christelle is currently working on one more, in addition to her memoir. Through her writing, she aims to build a lasting legacy for her daughters and "inspire the next generation of leaders and give a voice to the voiceless".