

Liya Rike

Prompt 6:

The news is mind control. The news has always fascinated me because of its power to influence ideas, beliefs, and actions. It was the 2020 presidential election that unearthed this belief in me, an election with the largest voter turnout in history because young people were engaged. The 2020 election, along with the BLM protests, really made me realize how divided the nation was, and I believe it's because of the news, or at least which version of the news you watch. It's evident that a particular group of people with similar opinions tend to watch the same news channel. What you see and hear on the news can make you do many things. It can be dangerous to the nation and has proved to be in recent years.

Knowing that I could influence people's view of the world as a journalist opened a new interest in journalism. I learned how to do intensive research on politics because, at the time, I enjoyed learning about the people and policies that dictate the country we lived in most. With this knowledge, I had long debates with people on a meme app called IFunny, which showed me just how different people's opinions were. The debates were usually political and with conservatives, so it would be about things like gun control. They argued that guns were a basic human right, but in the same sentence, would argue abortions are the enemy of innocent children, which didn't make sense to me considering the repeated school shootings in America. At the end of every discussion, I would ask, "What news channel do you watch?" and they would either respond with, "I do my own research" or name a news channel that reports a different version of the news I watch.

It is for all of these reasons that I find journalism compelling. When it's done right, you have the power to influence people with your knowledge, and the way you put your work out can change people's opinions on a topic. Also, how you address an event can affect people's reaction to it, like mind control in a way, that sounds evil, but it fascinates me. As a budding journalist, I aspire to use the power of my work to engage people to be active in national and international issues. I want to report on the problems that may not get attention to bring information to light.

Through a summer experience, I had the opportunity to ask questions of professional reporters like Gary Robertson of the Associated Press, Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan of News & Observer, and anchors like Laura Leslie of WRAL and Audrey Biesk of WXII. I asked them many questions, but I had the chance to ask a question that came from a place of fear within me, "How is journalism dangerous?" While my mom supports my dream of being a reliable journalist, she always reminds me that it's a dangerous profession, and I've always wondered, what danger? So I asked Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan this question, and her answer was surprisingly casual; she agreed it was dangerous to some extent. She explained that readers might not like you for your opinions and coverage, which could be a risk depending on the readers, or you could be working in a dangerous situation or place in the world. Still, she never felt as if her life was at stake while doing her job, which was a relief and quelled my fears because my mind had wandered and made me believe that I would be assassinated for spreading information that people didn't like or agree with.

Now when I watch the news, whether it be a fish on TikTok or a primetime broadcast, I take note of the methods they use to inform and influence, like overdramatizing or undermining a

situation and degrading or glorifying someone. I want to use these methods but twist them to make it so it doesn't manipulate an audience but informs them on a deeper level. As a future political journalist, I will uncover stories others want hidden and bring the truth to light.

"Journalism is what maintains democracy. It's the force for progressive social change." -Andrew Vachss.