



**FREE FOR YOU AND ME:**  
**A FIRST AMENDMENT EDUCATOR'S GUIDE**

Image © Manu Montoya

# FREE FOR YOU AND ME: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

## ABOUT THE GUIDE

“The freedom of religion,  
of speech, and of the press,  
the right to peaceful meetings,  
the right to seek redress—  
these five important freedoms  
are democracy’s foundation.  
Know these rights – defend them –  
and we’ll build a stronger nation.”

—Free for You and Me:

**What Our First Amendment Means**



These are the final words of the picture book **Free for You and Me: What Our First Amendment Means** (Albert Whitman & Company). Curriculum Coordinator Michelle Amato and the team at Curious City share discussion questions, research, and project ideas to help students (grades 4-7) know and defend their rights and in doing so, “build a stronger nation.” The guide will cover each of the five freedoms with various themes marked with icons:



Pledge of  
Allegiance



Equity



Personal  
Responsibility



Voting



Immigration

## ABOUT THE BOOK

**Free for You and Me:**

**What Our First Amendment Means**

By Christy Mihaly

Illustrated by Manu Montoya

Published by Albert Whitman & Company

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Age Range: 7-13

It's a free country! But what does that mean? Find out the five liberties protected by the First Amendment. Vivid examples from history and everyday life demonstrate the meaning of freedom of religion, speech, and the press, and the rights to assemble peacefully and to petition the government.



"Valuable as a gateway to further study." —*Kirkus Reviews*

# FREE FOR YOU AND ME: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

## FIVE FREEDOMS

As *Kirkus Reviews* said, this picture book is a “valuable as a gateway to further study.” There are so many ways to study the First Amendment and make it relevant to our student’s lives. Here are a few of the stronger resources. What are your favorite tools?

**Resource:** [Amendment Mini-Lesson](#) (Source: iCivics)

**Resource:** [Know Your Rights: Student Rights](#) (Source: ACLU)

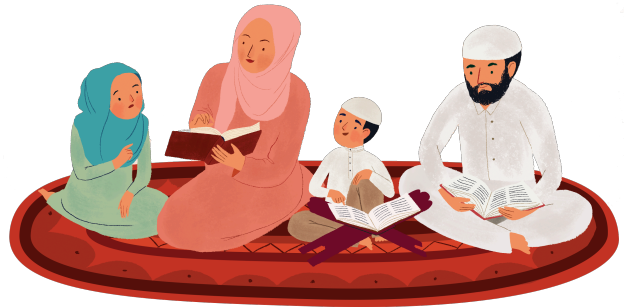
**Resource:** [First Amendment Lesson Plans](#) (Source: Teaching Tolerance)



## FREEDOM OF RELIGION

“The Constitution makes this clear:  
every faith is welcome here.  
There’s not just one our laws protect,  
for all alike deserve respect.  
This means that each of us can pray  
and celebrate in our own way.”

—Free for You and Me:  
What Our First Amendment Means



**Resource:** [Your Right to Religious Freedom](#) (Source: ACLU)

**Resource:** [Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools](#)  
(Source: First Amendment Center)

## Discussion & Reflection

Think about your own experience with religion or the lack of religion in your life, spirituality, and/or beliefs. How would your life be different if you were not allowed to say or practice what you believe?

**Tip:** Use a short write for reflection.

How do your fellow students and the school staff express this freedom in school through words, actions, or the things they wear? Pair and Share with someone who has a different religious background or view of this freedom than you. Does that fellow student or staff member notice different expressions of religion in your school?



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**Tip:** Use T-chart, Triple T-chart, or Venn and share the charts. Remember to add the new thinking that you and this partner create to your own chart before you finish the partner share.

Could parties or celebrations at school like Halloween, Easter, Christmas, Columbus Day, or other holidays at school make you or some of your classmates or community members uncomfortable? Why or why not? Do you think your school should celebrate all religious holidays or be secular (not include any religious celebrations)? Why or why not?

**Resource:** The Problems with Christmas Curriculum (Source: Teaching Tolerance)

**Resource:** The Christmas I Will Never Forget (Source: Teaching Tolerance)

If you are speaking in a courtroom or being sworn in to become a member of the government, it is traditional for you to put your hand on the Holy Bible. What book most represents what you believe and why? If that book is not the Holy Bible, would you choose to swear on your book choice? Would members of your family choose a different book?

**Resource:** You Don't Need to Take an Oath on a Bible or Any Religious Text  
(Source: *The New York Times*)

**Resource:** Congresswoman and Atheist Kyrsten Sinema Swears in to Congress Using Copy of Constitution (Source: *The Hill*)

**Resource:** Quran Oath Controversy of the 110th United States Congress  
(Source: The Library of Congress)

The Pledge of Allegiance states that America is “one nation under God.” Do you think that is a reference to the Christian God? Are all Americans Christians? Do all Americans believe in a god? Does the phrase reflect a nation of diverse faiths and beliefs? If not, how would you rewrite it?



**Resource:** Jefferson Took a Blade to His Bible: Presidents, Faith, and the New Bible Museum (Source: *The Washington Post*)

### Research & Investigation

Is there evidence that there is a dominant religion in the United States? How did President Eisenhower insert Christianity into the Pledge of Allegiance and our national currency? *Possible Responses: Pledge of Allegiance, using the Holy Bible in court, using the Holy Bible for swearing in ceremonies, “In God We Trust” on currency*



**Example:** Supreme Court Rejects Case Challenging in God We Trust (Source: Jurist)

**Resource:** National Motto (Source: State Symbols USA)

**Resource:** History of 'In God We Trust' (Source: U.S. Department of the Treasury)



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What was the point of view of the framers of the Constitution when they decided to add Freedom of Religion? Many of the founders were Deists. What do you know or what can you find out about the faith of Deism?

What evidence in current events can you find that the Freedom of Religion is still protecting citizens?

**Resource:** Religious Liberty (Challenges by ACLU) (Source: ACLU)

Do you know what religions are practiced by the members of Congress? Is there a dominant religion? What other evidence is there that our Congress has a dominant religion?

**Resource:** Faith on the Hill (Source: Pew Research Center)

**Resource:** Federal Court Upholds Prayer in Congress (Source: *The Washington Post*)

When the Constitution was formed, were all inhabitants of the United States included in the Freedom of Religion? Were, for example, enslaved Africans included?



**Resource:** Slavery in the Constitution by Paul Finkelman, Episode 10 of Teaching Hard History (Source: Teaching Tolerance)

Did the Framers include Native Americans in Freedom of Religion? What evidence can you find to support your argument?



**Resource:** History and Culture Indian Boarding Schools  
(Source: American Indian Relief Council)

What Native American tribes lived and live in your state? What can you discover about their belief systems or religions? How do you think that the government removing Native people from their land affected their belief systems? Is there evidence that the government sought to change their belief systems?



**Resource:** IndiVisible African-Native American Lives in the Americas

What groups immigrated to the United States because the Freedom of Religion was protected here?



### Projects

Create a progress report on how well America has upheld this freedom at different stages of history and/or for different cultural groups. The descriptors can be academic (what appears on paper) and behavioral (how we are treating each other). Consider a full report card using all the freedoms on the quality of life of the American people at the end of your unit.

# FREE FOR YOU AND ME: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



## FREEDOM OF SPEECH

“Because no one is always right,  
our founders wisely stated:  
‘We’ll make sure everyone can speak,  
so thoughts can be debated.’  
The First Amendment says that you  
can share your point of view—  
agree or disagree, discuss,  
say what you think is true.”

—Free for You and Me:

What Our First Amendment Means



## Discussion & Reflection

In most American schools, the Pledge of Allegiance is recited each morning. Have you read and thought about the words? Do you agree with all the ideas in the Pledge? If you could rewrite it to reflect what you believe, what would it say?

**Provided Worksheet:** “Free for You and Me: Pledge of Allegiance” (page 14)

**Resource:** [Teachers Guide to the Pledge of Allegiance](#)

(Source: National Bellamy Award Organization)

**Resource:** [What You May Not Know About the Pledge of Allegiance](#) (Source: NewsELA)

**Resource:** [ACLU Articles on the Pledge of Allegiance](#) (Source: ACLU)

Books are sometimes banned (removed) from school libraries because a member of the community does not like a theme or story. Whose Freedom of Speech is being exercised when this happens? Is someone else’s Freedom of Speech being limited? How could everyone’s rights be protected at once?

**Resource:** [Banned Books Week](#) (Source: American Library Association)

**Resource:** [Have You Ever Read a Book You Weren’t Supposed to Read?](#)

(Source: *New York Times*)

While everyone is given the Freedom of Speech, do you think some people get heard more than others? Who in your classroom is heard more than others? Who in your family? Who in your community? What are the traits of those who are heard more and those who are heard less? Partner and share your reflection.

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**Tip:** Use T-chart, Triple T-chart, or Venn and share the charts. Remember to add the new thinking that you and this partner create to your own chart before you finish the partner share.

The book says, “The First Amendment says that you / Can share your point of view— / agree or disagree, discuss, / Say what you think is true.” Do you think it is okay to use your Freedom of Speech to tell a lie?

**Tip:** Use a short write for reflection.

Some believe that the clothes you wear and the way you do your hair is a freedom of expression covered by the First Amendment's Freedom of Speech. Do you think dress codes at school go against Freedom of Speech or are dress codes just something that helps students be more equal?

**Resource:** [Dress Code Articles](#) (Source: Teaching Tolerance)

Schools in the United States block some websites to protect students from harmful content or content that is not appropriate for their age. Some schools include websites for LGBTQ+ students in their list of blocked websites. Do you think they should? What do you think the Constitution says?



**Resource:** [Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier](#) (Source: United States Courts)

**Resource:** [Banned Websites Awareness Day + Related Articles](#)  
(Source: American Association of School Librarians)

**Resource:** [Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ Students](#) (Source: Teaching Tolerance)

### Research & Investigation

What is hate speech? Is hate speech protected by Freedom of Speech?

**Resource:** [Hate Speech Articles](#) (Source: Teaching Tolerance)

When in history or in current events has students' Freedom of Speech been challenged?

**Example:** Vietnam War Armbands / [Tinker v. Des Moines](#) (1965)

**Example:** Bong Hits for Jesus / [Morse v. Frederick](#) (2007)

What is the code of conduct in your school? What is Freedom of Speech? How do the two concepts support each other? Where do they disagree?

What are student walk-outs? What issues have caused students to walk out in the last few years? What is the walk-out policy at your school?

**Resource:** [Students Rights: Speech, Walkouts and Other Protests](#) (Source: ACLU)

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## Projects

Find current events in which a student was sent home or kept from student activities because of their hair. Find six or more articles and chart the traits and similarities of the students that were profiled. What do you observe?



**Resource:** [How Natural Black Hair at Work Became a Civil Rights Issue](#) (Source: JSTOR)

**Resource:** [Should Your Hairstyle Be A Constitutional Right?](#) (Source: Teaching Tolerance)

Create a progress report on how well America has upheld Freedom of Speech at different stages of history and/or for different cultural groups. The descriptors can be academic (what appears on paper) and behavioral (how we are treating each other). Consider a full report card using all the freedoms on the quality of life of the American people at the end of your unit.



## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

“In a democracy, people need news—  
facts to consider when forming their views.  
That’s why reporters keep track of events,  
asking hard questions to help things make sense.  
They tell us the facts of the world, on our screens  
and on podcasts, in papers and news magazines.  
Knowledge is power; free press is the key—  
we must know the truth if we want to stay free.”  
—**Free for You and Me: What Our First Amendment Means**



**Resource:** [ACLU Freedom of the Press Resources](#)  
(Source: ACLU)

**Resource:** [Freedom of the Press Articles & Lesson Plans](#)  
(Source: Teaching Tolerance)

## Discussion & Reflection

The book says, “Knowledge is power; free press is the key.” What does that mean to you? Has there been a time that you were able to fix something because you learned something from another person or a news source?



**Tip:** Use a short write for reflection.

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In the book, how do the kids find out the mayor is going to close the playground? How did the news story help save the playground? What would have happened if no one had read this news story? How do you get news about your school or community or the world?

**Resource:** [Best News Websites for Students](#) (Common Sense Education)

The Pledge of Allegiance says, “with justice for all.” What is justice? Do you think “all” the people are represented equally in the news? How do you think more equal representation of all people in the news might help all people get justice?



**Provided Worksheet:** “Free for You and Me: Media Representation” (page 15-17)

Say there is an election at your school for Class President. You do not know any of the four students running for the position. If the school newspaper only runs a story on one candidate, can you vote responsibly?



On the national level, if one presidential candidate makes headlines and another candidate is ignored by the press, how might that affect people's votes?



## Research & Investigation

What are examples of fake news? How might fake news affect the right to a free press?

**Resource:** [Podcast: Fake News: Finding It, Fighting It](#) (Source: Teaching Tolerance)

**Resource:** [How to Spot Fake News](#) (Source: IFLA)

**Resource:** [Crash Course Navigating Digital Information Preview](#)  
(Source: John Green, YouTube)

What current events demonstrate that Freedom of the Press is still relevant?

**Resource:** [ACLU News of Freedom of the Press](#) (Source: ACLU)

## Project

With the provided worksheet, watch a newscast and check off who is reporting the news and who is being interviewed on the news. Look at the media's website and see who is making the decisions about stories. Are there people that are not being represented? Assign different news sources and compare results.



**Provided Worksheet:** “Free for You and Me: Media Representation” (page \*\*)

Is American media free of bias?

**Resource:** [Media Bias Chart](#)

## FREE FOR YOU AND ME: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Create a progress report on how well America has upheld this Freedom of the Press at different stages of history and/or for different cultural groups. The descriptors can be academic (what appears on paper) and behavioral (how we are treating each other). Consider a full report card using all the freedoms on the quality of life of the American people at the end of your unit.



### FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

“Freedom of assembly means Americans can show—with marches and rallies—what they want the world to know. Let’s have a demonstration! We’ll gather those who care, to sing, parade, and protest, and make others more aware.”

—Free for You and Me: What Our First Amendment Means



“Hosting a party, having a board game night with the neighbors, or even going to church are all freedom of assembly examples. The difference, however, is that freedom of assembly protects those whom the government believes may ‘cause trouble’ when they get together.”

—LegalDictionary.net

### Discussion & Reflection

The Pledge of Allegiance calls the country “indivisible.” Indivisible means Americans cannot be divided or split up. Can we be indivisible and also disagree? How does the right to assembly, protected by the Constitution, affect our ability to disagree?

**Tip:** Use a short write for reflection.

Have you ever encountered an assembly of people, a protest, or a celebration that changed the way you thought about the world or introduced you to a new idea? Pair and share.

Have you ever encountered an assembly of people or a protest that made you uncomfortable? Do people you do not agree with also have the right to assemble? Pair and share.

If you were to bring people together to celebrate or protest something you cared about, what would it be? What if Freedom of Assembly were taken away and you could not hold this envisioned event? Is anything lost? Who benefits from your event not being held?



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## Research & Investigation

Do students have a right to freedom of assembly?

**Resource:** Student Rights: The First Amendment Pamphlet (Assembly Section)  
(Source: ACLU of RI)

**Example:** Equal Access Act (1984) (Source: First Amendment Encyclopedia)

Climate change and gun violence have led to school walk-outs all over the country. What is your school's policy on school walk-outs? Does this policy support the Freedom of Assembly?



**Resource:** Students Rights: Speech, Walkouts and Other Protests (Source: ACLU)

How have Americans used the Freedom of Assembly in the last 10 years to both oppose and support immigration? Make a list of hashtags, slogans on protest signs, and quotes from both sides that you feel make a strong statement.



How did the Civil Rights Movement show the country that African Americans were unlawfully denied the Freedom of Assembly?



## Project

If you were to bring people together to celebrate or protest something you cared about, what would it be? Write a slogan (a short, memorable phrase that contains your mission or a call to action). Can your slogan also be a #hashtag?



Look at the timeline in the back of the book of Americans exercising their Freedom of Assembly. What events are missing? Which Americans are missing? What age groups are missing? Consider adding to the growing timeline on our [Google Spreadsheet](#).



Create a progress report on how well America has upheld this Freedom of Assembly at different stages of history and/or for different cultural groups. The descriptors can be academic (what appears on paper) and behavioral (how we are treating each other). Consider a full report card using all the freedoms on the quality of life of the American people at the end of your unit.



## FREE FOR YOU AND ME: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

### FREEDOM TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES

“When we want to tell our leaders that they’re doing something wrong, we can bring them a petition, and they’ll hear our voices, strong. Politicians need to hear us; we’re the ones they represent. Our leaders keep their jobs only if we give consent.”

—Free for You and Me:  
What Our First Amendment Means



### Discussion & Reflection

In the book, the kids create a petition. What is their “grievance”? What is their “redress”?

The book reads, “Our leaders keep their jobs only if we give consent.” This refers to Americans’ right to vote leaders in and out of office. Young people are not allowed to vote. What are ways that young people can petition for redress of grievances?



**Resource:** [We Don't Need Special Powers to Make a Difference](#)  
(Source: Teaching Tolerance)

Each morning we recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The pledge says with “liberty and justice for all.” Is there “liberty and justice for all” in America? If not, do Americans have a responsibility to petition within our schools, communities, or country if we see injustice?



**Resource:** [Articles & Lesson Plans on Race, Justice & Courts](#)

What “grievances” do you have in your family, school, community, or country? What form of redress would you seek? What hashtags might you make to highlight your grievance?



### Research & Investigation

What groups were denied the right to vote during this country’s history? What freedoms did they exercise to get the right to vote?



Look for examples of non-verbal petitions or times when people have used their bodies and not their words to make a statement or protest.

*Possible Responses: Take a knee, sit-in*

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Look for examples of hashtags that allowed people to petition for “redress of grievances.” How is using a hashtag different from starting a petition or writing a letter?

*Possible Responses: #climastrike, #fridaysforfuture, #blacklivesmatter, #Enough, #Neveragain, #metoo*

When refugees ask our government for asylum, are they asking for “redress of grievances”? Look at the assertion by government officials that some immigrants are “illegal.” Look at 8 U.S. Code §1158 which states that anyone in the world has the right to come to the United States and petition the government for asylum. If refugees ask the government for asylum, are they in fact “illegal”?



### Projects

Create a chart of the “governance” of your school. Who makes what decisions about what issues? Take a real or imagined “grievance” and decide the best strategy to seek “redress.” How do you seek redress in your family?

Create a progress report on how well America has upheld this Freedom to Petition the Government at different stages of history and/or for different cultural groups. The descriptors can be academic (what appears on paper) and behavioral (how we are treating each other). Consider a full report card using all the freedoms on the quality of life of the American people at the end of your unit.

## CONNECT WITH THE AUTHOR

Author Christy Mihaly would love to connect with your class. Inquire about video chats at [ChristyMihaly.com/contact](http://ChristyMihaly.com/contact). You can find her on Twitter [@CMwriter4kids](https://twitter.com/CMwriter4kids), Instagram [@christymihaly](https://www.instagram.com/christymihaly), or [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/christymihaly). Connect to the conversation at [#freeforyouandmebook](https://twitter.com/freeforyouandmebook).

## GUIDE CREATORS

**Michelle Amato** is a Portland, Maine, Public School Chapter 104 Consulting Teacher, a Global Factivist-Activist Volunteer Leader with the [ONE Campaign](#), a mother, grandmother, and wife. Michelle volunteers in her community with the Culture Club Task Force 2.0 as a public school representative and coordinator where she collaborates with arts institutions in the city to bring the vision of using collective impact to ensure that public school students have access to the arts. Her passion is teaching about the responsibility that we all have to bring the power of the people to the people who have the power. She knows that through activating love, embracing difference, and demanding justice she will help others, and herself, that is what living free is all about!

**Kirsten Cappy** is an advocate for children’s literature, children’s book creators, schools, libraries, and literacy. Through [Curious City](#), she creates free children’s literature engagement materials. Those lesson plans, activities, event kits, videos, and more connect readers with story through play, inquiry, conversation, and social action. Kirsten is also the Executive Director of [I’m Your Neighbor Books](#), a non-profit that shares children’s literature featuring the lives of New Arrivals and New Americans to create a stronger culture of Welcoming and Belonging. The non-profit tours the [Welcoming Library](#), a pop-up community conversation on immigration using picture books.

# FREE FOR YOU AND ME: THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

In most of our schools, the Pledge of Allegiance is recited each morning. Have you read and thought about the words? Do you agree with all the statements made in the Pledge? **If you could rewrite it to reflect what you believe, what would it say?**

Author Christy Mihaly would love to hear your ideas on the Pledge. Share them on social media with the hashtag **#freeforyouandmebook**. *Always ask an adult's permission and always keep your full name and location private online.* You can also share it with the book's author at [ChristyMihaly.com/contact](http://ChristyMihaly.com/contact).



**I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America,**

**and to the Republic for which it stands,**

**one Nation under God,**

**indivisible,**

**with liberty and justice for all.**

# FREE FOR YOU AND ME:

## MEDIA REPRESENTATION: REPORTERS & NEWSCASTERS

1) Watch a newscast with this and the People in the News sheet in front of you. 2) Put checks in the boxes below to mark who you see. 3) Look at the data you have gathered/produced. Are there people who are not represented, or are under-represented? Is there a group that is overrepresented? What does this make you wonder or think? 4) Who has the power? Is that power being used the way the Freedom of the Press was intended to be used? How might this affect Freedom of Speech?

NOTE: We recognize that the labels on these boxes are limited. Do your best to observe and select the traits that you think are important and consider making your own labels or categories. There are no wrong answers.

### SOURCE

News Source	
Date	

### AGE

Child	
Teenager	
Adult	
Senior Citizen	
Other or Unsure	

### GENDER

Man	
Non-binary	
Woman	
Other or Unsure	

### COMMUNITY

African American	
American Pacific Islander	
Asian American	
Latinx	
Muslim American	
Native American	
White	
Other or Unsure	

### ABILITY

Abled	
Disabled	
Other or Unsure	

### RELIGION

Buddhist	
Christian	
Hindu	
Jewish	
Muslim	
Sikh	
Other or Unsure	

### IDENTITY

Heterosexual	
LGBTQIA+	
Other or Unsure	

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# FREE FOR YOU AND ME:

## MEDIA REPRESENTATION: PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

1) Watch a newscast with this and the Reporters & Newscasters sheet in front of you. 2) Put checks in the boxes below to mark who you see featured and interviewed. 3) Look at the data you have gathered/produced. Are there people who are not represented, or are under-represented? Is there a group that is overrepresented? What does this make you wonder or think? 4) Who is represented in the news? How might under or over representation affect the Freedom of the Press or Freedom of Speech?

NOTE: We recognize that the labels on these boxes are limited. Do your best to observe and select the traits that you think are important and consider making your own labels or categories. There are no wrong answers.

### SOURCE

News Source	
Date	

### AGE

Child	
Teenager	
Adult	
Senior Citizen	
Other or Unsure	

### GENDER

Man	
Non-binary	
Woman	
Other or Unsure	

### COMMUNITY

African American	
American Pacific Islander	
Asian American	
Latinx	
Muslim American	
Native American	
White	
Other or Unsure	

### ABILITY

Abled	
Disabled	
Other or Unsure	

### RELIGION

Buddhist	
Christian	
Hindu	
Jewish	
Muslim	
Sikh	
Other or Unsure	

### IDENTITY

Heterosexual	
LGBTQIA+	
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# FREE FOR YOU AND ME:

## MEDIA REPRESENTATION: NEWS PRODUCERS

1) After watching a newscast, locate the news program's website and navigate to About Us. 2) Look at the editorial and/or producer team. Put checks in the boxes below to mark who you see. 3) Look at the data you have gathered/produced. Are there people who are not represented, or are under-represented? Is there a group that is overrepresented? What does this make you wonder or think? 4) Who has the power? Is that power being used the way the Freedom of the Press was intended to be used? How might this affect Freedom of Speech?

NOTE: We recognize that the labels on these boxes are limited. Do your best to observe and select the traits that you think are important and consider making your own labels or categories. There are no wrong answers.

### SOURCE

News Source	
Date	

### AGE

Child	
Teenager	
Adult	
Senior Citizen	
Other or Unsure	

### GENDER

Man	
Non-binary	
Woman	
Other or Unsure	

### COMMUNITY

African American	
American Pacific Islander	
Asian American	
Latinx	
Muslim American	
Native American	
White	
Other or Unsure	

### ABILITY

Able	
Disabled	
Other or Unsure	

### RELIGION

Buddhist	
Christian	
Hindu	
Jewish	
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Sikh	
Other or Unsure	

### IDENTITY

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LGBTQIA+	
Other or Unsure	

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