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**DEMOCRATIZING CRITICAL MEDIA  
LITERACY EDUCATION: PRELIMINARY NOTES ON FORMING  
THE MEDIA LITERACY ACCESS INITIATIVE (MLAI)**

I am in the process of constructing an independent non-profit educational organization to foster and spread critical media literacy skills locally and globally. I have recently completed a second MA degree in Leadership Studies (in Servant Leadership) at Gonzaga University located in Spokane, Washington, USA, where a proposal and outline of this organization has been completed as my final capstone project. However, I am looking for additional feedback regarding my idea and proposal from other academics and educators going forward. The working name of the organization is the Media Literacy Access Initiative (MLAI).

The Media Literacy Access Initiative (MLAI) is an educational startup organization I wish to independently construct and implement in the public sphere.

Media literacy is the ability to analyze and critique media; critically understand media as a business; to consider alternative media; to make/produce digital media, promote unmediated experiences and to actively participate in democracy with increased critical thinking skills.

This will start as a small-scale organization that I will run and teach independent of being a university professor of media studies. At first, this will be a solo endeavor where I teach media literacy workshops in the community (for example at public libraries, primary/secondary schools, college/universities, community centers, religious organizations, nursing homes, within international contexts for both educators, students and everyday citizens). Eventually I would like to hire a small staff of instructors who can teach the workshops alongside my efforts and leadership. A long-term vision of the organization is to create a larger community service-based organization akin to AmeriCorps, where recent college undergraduates (in Media or Communications) and those with a master's degree can serve communities by becoming educators and trainers of critical media literacy. They will also receive training via MLAI to keep the teachings consistent.

The primary rationale of MLAI is to provide critical media literacy educational access/equity to citizens in the United States and in a global context. Since media has become such a profound agent of socialization in our daily lives, it is vital to understand how media is constructed, for whom, and for what purposes. It is estimated the average American interacts with media for 8 hours a day, which amounts to a third of our lives. Media literacy training is typically limited to the college classroom, a very limited and elite audience where only about 30% of Americans receive a bachelor's degree (and within this, a select few obtain media literacy skills). While some states such as Illinois are mandating media literacy at the high school level, the critical subject matter is generally not taught more broadly in the United States and abroad. This lack

of media literacy education has large implications for democracy, as people can easily be manipulated by media ideologies and information. Thus, a primary goal of this initiative is to set up an educational organization and increase access to media literacy education and training in both face to face and in an online context to better promote democracy and vital critical thinking skills both locally and globally.