ONE Converged Literacy

It was a classic case of burying the lede, but this time Youth Radio's Finnegan Hamill hadn't even written a story—yet. In 1999 Finnegan was a junior at Berkeley High, taking a break from his Youth Radio peer teaching job to focus on academics, his position at the school newspaper, hockey, and church. But he stayed connected to Youth Radio with occasional visits, especially when he had a story idea.

For almost twenty minutes Finnegan caught up with then Deputy Director Beverly Mire, whose office was the first stop for many students headed into the building on their way to class and for alumni swinging by to visit. Bev remembers covering the usual topics: what was going on at school, the latest Youth Radio news, that kind of thing. Mindful that class would start in a few minutes, Bev says she was about to end their conversation when Finnegan mentioned, almost as an aside, that he'd been "emailing this girl

in Kosovo." A huge massacre had just taken place there, and the bloody civil struggle was escalating into full-blown international war. NATO was preparing to drop bombs. News outlets around the world scrambled to devise an angle on this incredibly complex crisis, and Finnegan had found a direct line to one sixteen-year-old girl witnessing the run-up to war from her apartment balcony. And that line came through email, of all things, itself an emerging medium at the time, at least as a means to connect two teenagers unknown to each other in real life, separated by a vast distance in geography and experience. To think Bev could have let Finnegan walk right out the door, had he not just in time gotten around to his lede.

Bev had previously been a radio music director. She described the moment she heard about Finnegan's emails as like playing a hit record for the first time: "A feeling goes through you, and you're like, 'Oh my God, this is big.'" And it was. *Emails from Kosovo* became a regular series that aired in seven installments on National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*, from February to June 1999. President Bill Clinton quoted the Youth Radio series on March 29, 1999, in his radio address announcing U.S. participation in NATO's bombing campaign (emphasis added):

> PRESIDENT CLINTON: Three days ago I decided the United States should join our NATO allies in military air strikes to bring peace to Kosovo. . . . We should remember the courage of the Kosovar people today, still exposed to violence and brutality. *Many Americans, now, have heard the story of a young Kosovar girl trying to stay in touch with a friend in America by e-mail, as a Serb attack began. Just a few days ago she wrote, "at the moment, just from my balcony, I can see people running with suitcases, and I can hear some gunshots. A village just a few hundred meters from my house is all surrounded. As long as I have electricity, I will continue writing to you. I'm trying to keep myself as calm as possible. My younger brother, who is nine, is sleeping now. I wish I will not have to stop his dreams."*

Emails from Kosovo was a turning point for Youth Radio. It put the organization on the national news map, winning the prestigious Alfred I. DuPont Award, and revealed the potential for youth media to cover, and even influence, international affairs. The stakes attached to this particular story were pretty extreme; it was not every day, after all, that Youth Radio found itself leveraged by the president of the United

States in an emotional justification for war, or that a story's key source faced grave bodily danger. The scale and intensity of this series raised a distinct set of challenges, as we elaborate below. And yet whenever young people produce real media products for real broadcast audiences, the same issues arise in some form: complex decisions related to content, voice, boundaries, balance, impact, control, responsibility, and credit.

It might seem strange to frame the capacity to handle these issues as a form of literacy, and yet that is just what we aim to do in this chapter. We offer a new approach to understanding and promoting youth media learning: *converged literacy.*

As Henry Jenkins (2006b) has argued, in the media world *convergence* describes content expressed through a range of technologies all housed in one place, a website, for example, that features audio, graphics, digital photos, video clips, and a way for visitors to post comments. It's not just that you can find such a wide range of materials in a single location; convergence also makes it possible for a single piece of media to be distributed across a whole range of platforms. You might listen to the same Youth Radio story on your car stereo, through a podcast, by clicking on an online audio link, or by showing up at a community event where the story blares from speakers, the sound filling an assembly hall packed with people.

Literacy, the second key term in the concept we explore here, is a process of making, reading, understanding, and critiquing texts. In today's world, those texts increasingly transcend words on a page (Kress, 2003). Rather than frame literacy as a neutral function of the isolated mind, we locate young people's textual experiments and analyses in social contexts, sometimes face-to-face, and sometimes mediated through digital technologies.

In this chapter we bring together these two terms, *convergence* and *literacy,* to articulate what it takes for young people to claim a right to participate as citizens of the world and agents in their own lives (Ong, 1999). We develop the notion of converged literacy by exploring the processes behind four Youth Radio products. The *Emails from Kosovo* series provides a glimpse into a form of convergence created before the term came into mainstream fashion, revealing some of the educational and ethical challenges that arise when young people's private communication enters the public domain. The *Core Class,* Youth Radio's broadcast

media course for incoming students, shows how the program has had to transform both what and how it teaches in order to stay relevant given new developments in digital media culture and face-to-face community engagement. The 2002 feature story, *Oakland Scenes,* mixes poetry and news reporting to examine the sources and effects of escalating murder rates in that city. Here Youth Radio producers reframe a topic that media makers too often use to criminalize young people and deflect attention away from the root causes and effects of persistent violence. In this story, youth expressive culture interrupts that tired narrative. The *Picturing War* story that Belia Mayeno Saavedra reported in the wake of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal examines digital media as a tool for cultural analysis and transformation. The story highlights U.S. Marines' responses to prison torture and the online archives of digital photos they took while deployed in Iraq.

HOW MEDIA MAKES LITERACIES CONVERGE

Convergence is a technological achievement, something machines produce by combining various media platforms in a single presentation. It's also a state of mind, something people imagine into being by learning to think, feel, express themselves, and understand their worlds across image, sound, and text (Jenkins, 2006b). The technological and conceptual shift implicit in the principle of convergence is changing what it takes to create media. There are new rules, and new ways to break them. For example, production in today's media world cannot be disentangled from distribution, so converged media makers need to know how to leverage and sometimes create their own means to circulate their content rather than rely on one-way outlets with automatic audiences. Also converging in today's media worlds are the makers' intentions and interests. Is the point to inspire, to sell, to convince, to mobilize, to inform, to disturb, or some combination? As evident in such developments as consumer-generated marketing (where users co-create ad campaigns) and nontransparent corporate sponsorships (where bloggers accept free gadgets and then plug those brands in their posts), the convergence of various intentions in a single media product can raise new challenges for

both producers and consumers, who often have to work harder to find or ignore commercial interests embedded in editorial content. That said, young people increasingly deploy these same commercial strategies to build their own creative brands and draw interest to their original work.

Converged literacy implies that the printed word is just the beginning, or maybe not even the beginning, of what young people need to be able to deal with if they are to participate fully in shaping their lives and futures (Buckingham 2003; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Sefton Green, 1999; Tyner, 1998). Scholars such as Shirley Brice Heath (1983, 1986) and Brian Street (1984) revolutionized the study of literacy by arguing that people learn to compose and consume written texts through meaningful social events, such as reading bedtime stories or navigating neighborhood streets. New literacy scholars recognize that young people form some of their most nuanced, persistent, and consequential relationships to texts and narratives outside explicit instruction, but deeply inside interactive contexts: playing hopscotch, doing community theater, mastering video games, talking at the dinner table, rapping, busting poems, or devouring magazines in a friend's bedroom (Finders, 1997; Fisher, 2003; Gee, 2003; Goodwin, 1990; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Ochs & Capps, 2001).

Digital technologies have further stretched literacy to encompass an ability to use a range of tools and programs and to analyze how power circulates through engagements with media (Hull 2003). Young people can use digital literacy as a tool or even a weapon, but literacy can also be used against them, as yet another instrument of exclusion (Alim, 2005). After all, documenting the impressive multiliteracy benefits of launching a blog, creating a profile, or uploading an amateur music video onto YouTube is one thing; it's another challenge entirely to identify what young people actually learn from these experiences, how they benefit, who is shut out from these activities, and what the media project itself contributes to (or detracts from) the public domain. Likewise, Tannock (2004, p. 164) cautions that researchers themselves are often overly eager to "redeem" that which is literate in youth culture: "The academic documentation of literacy among social groups and individuals for whom such literacy has previously been left unrecognized is not in and of itself an automatically enabling or progressive move, but can in fact be extremely disempowering for the subjects of our research." The *Emails*

from Kosovo series has been subjected to questions like these, faulted in one online newspaper for exploiting one girl's dispatches while providing a rationale for U.S. and NATO militarism. Finnegan himself, seven years after the NPR series, used his own blog to express some potent critiques of the media machine that made him, for one very intense period in his life, "Kosovo Boy," suddenly caught in his own firestorm of competing adult attentions and agendas. We're featuring his story in a chapter about literacy, and yet Finnegan himself reports in his blog that when Katie Couric asked him back then what he learned from working on the series, "I couldn't think of a damn thing." As evident in this sentiment, when young media producers examine power and its effects, and when their products reach real audiences, the meaning attached to their emerging literacies can be hard to predict and not always what we think.

Three principles of converged literacy drive the design and analysis of youth media learning. Converged literacy is an ability to *make and understand* boundary-crossing and convention-breaking texts; means knowing how to *draw and leverage* public interest in the stories you want to tell; and entails the material and imaginative resources to *claim and exercise* your right to use media to promote justice, variously defined—a right still denied young people marginalized from full citizenship as producers of media culture.

CONVERGENCE IN CORRESPONDENCE: *EMAILS FROM KOSOVO*

After hearing about Finnegan's collection of emails from Kosovo, Beverly Mire says she walked him over to Rebecca Martin, Youth Radio's senior producer, and Ellin O'Leary, Youth Radio's founder and executive producer, to help him figure out how to turn his private correspondence into a public radio story. The emails had an awkward candor and a feeling of tentative cross-cultural curiosity that brought something unexpected to the news the girl delivered through her notes to Finnegan. Still, initially the conversation didn't always delve deeply into the conditions of war and its effects on local youth. Finnegan and his producers framed questions that would reveal new information about the volatile political situation.

As the digital conversation continued, the Youth Radio production team played with different ways to present the emails, experimenting with various sequencing and editing, all the while imagining how to create a story that was true and clear and powerful for an audience meeting two young people for the first time, even as they got to know each other. The team came up with a pseudonym, Adona, for the girl in Kosovo, and after she agreed to allow her words to air on national radio, they asked a female Youth Radio reporter to record Adona's emails for broadcast.

FINNEGAN: It all started because I had the week off from hockey practice. I went to a meeting of my church group; we had a visitor, a peace worker recently back from Kosovo. He brought with him the email address of an Albanian girl my age, 16 year old Adona. She had access to a computer and wanted to use it to correspond with other teens, here in the U.S. I decided to write her a letter when I got back from the meeting. The next day I received the first of what was to be a series of letters from Adona, that would change the way I look at the world.

ADONA: *Hello Finnegan. I am glad you wrote to me so soon. About my English, I have learned it through the movies, school, special classes, etcetera, but mostly from TV. I can speak Serbian as well, Spanish and understand a bit of Turkish. I love learning languages, but I don't have much time to learn them. . . .*

You never know what will happen to you. One night, last week I think, we were all surrounded by police and armed forces, and if it wasn't for the OSCE observers, God knows how many victims would there be. And my flat was surrounded too. I cannot describe you the fear. . . . The next day, a few meters from my flat, they killed this Albanian journalist, Enver Maloku. Someday before there was a bomb explosion in the center of town where young people usually go out. . . .

ADONA: *Hello Finnie. I guess you're ok. And don't worry, your finger will get better soon. Well Finnie (I like calling you that) did I tell you that I am not a practicing Muslim and do you know why! . . . Because, if the Turks didn't force my grand grandparents to change their religion, I might now have been a catholic or an orthodox . . . I think religion is a good, clean and pure thing that in a way supports people in their life . . . . Thanks to religion, I think many people are afraid of god or believe that there is another world after we die, so they don't commit any crimes. Personally, I agree with Descartes when he says that god is imagined by the human mind.*

And just to tell you. You are not making me bored with your e-mails at

all, I love reading them. I love to hear about the life there and I am really happy that I have a friend somewhere who I can talk to (whoops . . . write to). Bye, Adona.

FINNEGAN: Adona may not think much of organized religion, but she is very political. She's part of an organized youth movement that blames adults for keeping the war going. She says, as young people, they are looking beyond this war to the future and an end to the killing. . . .

ADONA: *About the NATO thing, you know I feel they should come here and protect us. I wish somebody could. I don't even know how many people get killed anymore. You just see them in the memoriam pages of newspapers. I really don't want to end up raped, with no parts of body like the massacred ones. I wish nobody in the world, in the whole universe would have to go through what we are. You don't know how lucky you are to have a normal life. We all want to be free and living like you do, having our rights and not be pushed and pushed. Finnegan, I'm telling you how I feel about this war and my friends feel the same. Bye. Adona, Kosovo.*

At the time Youth Radio produced this story, for Finnegan to reach out to Adona through digital technology was by no means a given—email was still relatively new—nor was it commonplace to mine emails and other such sources for media content. Recognizing a stash of emails as broadcast-worthy material was itself a key step in producing this series, and counterintuitive given radio's conventional dependence on actually hearing the voices of all characters in any story. Building the narrative around "found audio" (or, more accurately, personal correspondence that wasn't even audio yet, but had the potential to be) meant breaking from the standard formula for a public radio news script. Typically a reporter carries out a number of interviews with characters and experts, usually representing opposing sides of a given issue, gathers scene tape, and then arranges these elements into an outline, composing narration that moves the listener through the various clips. In the *Emails from Kosovo* series the composition is actually much simpler, and yet perhaps that stripped-down quality is part of what made the story work: just two voices lending the series a quality of eavesdropping on (or reading over the shoulder of) young people immersed in a still unfolding conversation.

Yet, although the structure might be simple, the questions and

challenges connected to this story quickly proliferated. With so many resources channeled toward this one international series, Youth Radio's adult producers remember that they had to call a special meeting with the youth reporters in the Bay Area newsroom to make sure the young people did not feel that their own stories were being eclipsed. The story dealt with historic political and religious conflict, an ethnic cleansing campaign, militarism, and genocide. But when the broadcasts drew so much attention, suddenly the news reporter became the news story, and that wasn't easy. Neither was figuring out where to draw the line between reporting a story and intervening on behalf of a young person's well-being. Journalism's conventional detachment didn't always apply, for example when Youth Radio backed a petition to get Adona into a safer situation. Moreover, producers had to verify Adona's identity and fact-check her experiences without compromising her safety and without the international reporting infrastructure of a mass-media network. Negotiating relationships with Finnegan's church group, especially after the story became popular, was very difficult. These two nonprofit, youth-serving institutions suddenly found themselves in conversations with mass-media outlets like *People* magazine (which featured the story) and CNN (which exposed Adona's real name after Youth Radio had worked so hard to protect her anonymity). All these players, each with its own agenda, were then drawn into the public relations and speech-writing machinery behind a U.S. president's foreign policy.

Talk about convergence. As Jenkins (2006b) argues, connecting previously distinct media forms is more than a technological or editorial exercise; the process can disrupt the way institutions usually function and people relate to each other. In this context, organizations such as Youth Radio need to generate new guidelines for the use of personal correspondence in public stories and new clarity regarding where professional broadcast objectives end and youth development concerns begin, a point to which we return later in this chapter. Just as Adona's email messages to Finnegan moved fluidly from popular culture references (her favorite artists were the Rolling Stones, Sade, Jewel, Cher, and REM) to emergency escape plans and political analysis, so too do young people outside war zones (or inside other kinds of war zones right here at home) occupy social worlds where the intimate and the public, leisure and life-

and-death decisions, converge. It is within that space of convergence that Youth Radio works, beginning with a young person's first experience with the organization, the introductory class called Core.

EMERGENT CONVERGENCE:
YOUTH RADIO'S CORE CLASS

When Youth Radio started in 1992, students in the program produced single-voice, first-person commentaries recorded and cut (literally, with razor blades) on quarter-inch tape. By 1999, when Finnegan first shared his correspondence with Adona in the *Emails from Kosovo* series, Youth Radio's introductory classes had expanded beyond the commentary, emphasizing multiple media formats and genres. Every week students produced a radio show that rotated among deejayed music segments, preproduced Public Service Announcements, and scripted commentaries and news spots delivered in real time on the air. In the early 2000s, the introductory classes began providing training across these various radio formats while also introducing students to web programming, music production, and video.

Students met twice weekly after school to prepare for their show, *Youth in Control,* airing Fridays at 7–9 PM on KPFB FM. The twenty students in the class were divided into groups that focused on journalism, on-air broadcast, and music. The groups cycled through each of these streams, so that all students experienced every role. Young people who were nervous about reading a commentary or hosting a roundtable live on the radio couldn't opt out of these tasks. When their names appeared on the board (a rundown of the show clock), they'd snap on headphones, lean into the mic, and start talking. Their delivery could be halting, the narrative sometimes predictable, but still, it's never as hard as the first time. All students produced their own music and deejayed segments they programmed themselves, abiding by FCC decency standards. They also created a short digital video project, which they learned to upload to Youth Radio's website. Call it compelled, if rudimentary, convergence: students completed each of these requirements and others, listed on a huge chart in the middle of the workroom, before moving on to specialized training.

On a typical Friday night in 2006, an accomplished drummer and hip-hop producer in his late teens was in the backroom, helping students add percussion and keyboard tracks to the music they were producing. A peer editor, his shirt now untucked from his high school uniform, juggled two commentaries, one about the link between youth violence and the lack of afterschool activities, and the other an analysis of the overconcentration of liquor stores in poor communities. A journalism peer teacher, with her trademark deadpan voice, was telling a reticent commentator that no, she couldn't get another student to read her piece on the air, she'd have to do it herself, and it would be fine. The video instructor, one year out of high school, modeled microphone techniques for students working on an iMovie about how fantasy video games affect young people's real-life behaviors. Minutes before they'd have to record, two students working on a Public Service Announcement about a support group for abused girls were adding believable dialogue to spice up the script.

Alana Germany, a high school senior, sat with her peer teacher to review a list of roundtable questions, which centered on how young people deal with the entertainment industry's unrealistic beauty ideals. Alana was right to be nervous: just a few minutes into her roundtable, one of the young men on the panel started talking about boys and girls in ways she found very troubling (a slight paraphrase: "We all want the big booty and the big titties, you feel me?"), and this was live on the radio. Alana came back to the studio with her jaw set, avoiding eye contact, seeming close to tears. Behind closed doors in the studio, she explained why she was so upset: "Why would he start acting a fool? That makes Youth Radio look bad, and that's on me, because it was my roundtable." A peer in the program who had been practicing her digital editing during the show shared Alana's outrage and stormed out of the studio to tell off her fellow student. All of the peer educators in these interactions were young people in their teens and early twenties, some still in high school, all Youth Radio graduates.

The *Youth in Control* shows that students produced in Youth Radio's Core class were shot through with beautiful bits: unscripted conversations about love or frustration, shout-outs to peer teachers from students dedicating songs to their mentors, and moments when an R & B classic showed up on someone's playlist and soon everyone back in the studio

was singing out loud to Marvin Gaye. But these shows also contained their share of cringe-inducing passages, revealing that even the most sophisticated technology users, so-called digital natives (Prensky, 2001, 2006), do not automatically know how to compose a compelling story, respond thoughtfully to live questions, collect usable tape, project a strong personality through the microphone, or fill dead air. Neither do young people necessarily show up with nuanced understandings of social structures or with tools to critique mainstream (or independent, for that matter) media products. James Gee (2000, p. 62) writes that although schools are busily trying to teach young people how to think "critically," that is, to exercise higher-order cognitive skills, it's equally if not more pressing for students to learn how to think "critiquely," meaning to understand that injustice is not inevitable but continually produced, and therefore something we can actually question and resist. Growing up connected to digital technology does not, of course, automatically promote social critique, even if young people today might be more sophisticated than their predecessors were when it comes to recognizing and resisting media manipulations. In fact, several studies suggest that young people's own projects often reproduce stereotypes and predictable media formulas, whether the young producers are working in adult-sponsored programs or peer groups or on their own (Fleetwood 2005; Sinker 2000; Soep 2005b; Tyner 1998).

Just as we can't assume that young people's media products will automatically contain politically astute social critiques, neither can we rely on popular culture to instill converged literacy, even among so-called digital natives—not when some young people can easily leverage personal networks and resources to land internships at media organizations while others are lucky to grab a few minutes on a janky public school computer to check email. That is why, in 2006, a team of adult and youth staff members set out to redesign the Youth Radio Core class to align that introductory training more fully with digital media culture. Two considerations guided the redesign process. First, we prioritized production projects designed to reach significant audiences through various new and old media outlets available in digital culture. Second, we wanted to promote socially relevant and meaningful content, projects that contribute to justice and equity and offer narratives not typically taken seriously by those framing the debates and policies that shape

young people's lives. We wanted to create positive learning experiences and professional opportunities for young people otherwise marginalized from digital privilege.

With all this in mind, we identified a series of priorities guiding what our students needed to know and be able to do. Youth Radio students who had previously focused on the one-time live radio broadcast on KPFB needed to know how to reframe their media as customizable and versatile, lending itself to unregulated online distribution and community use at face-to-face events. The organization, which had fought so hard for on-air credit on national outlets, needed to teach students to start giving away their work, posting their stories everywhere they could, targeting niche audiences likely to link to or share those stories with others in their own networks of friends and colleagues. We needed to cultivate audiences not just for NPR-style products, but also for projects containing resonant content aimed at youth audiences.

Instead of having students summarize newspaper stories in radio spots they recited on the air (modeled on the old media "rip and read" technique), in the new program they would read print stories, record "person on the street" interviews, host live roundtable discussions building on news themes, and digitize, edit, and upload audio and video clips and commentary onto Youth Radio's website and other sites for user-generated content. At more advanced levels of training, in addition to teaching students the standard public radio–style feature script, peer educators designed hybrid assignments, for example mixing song clips and first-person narratives in segments that could air on Youth Radio's iTunes radio show as well as on websites featuring user-generated song reviews. Students would need to think beyond digital distribution for their products, connecting as well with classroom- and community-based educators eager to integrate youth-produced content into their own settings for education and community organizing.

Throughout this redesign process, Youth Radio students and staff broke from comfortable protocols for teaching radio in the old days, back when an audio story would evaporate into the ether as soon as it aired. That said, the mission of the organization's media production work has not really budged; we still were determined to create an environment in which young people can generate powerful, socially meaningful,

urgently needed content in an environment promoting positive youth and community development. Although the technologies are always changing, the core competencies outlined in Youth Radio's Core class syllabus are, if not platform-agnostic, conducive to remixing to maximize impact and continue to center on preparing young people to tell meaningful stories with relevance to their own lives, their communities, and the wider society.

POETIC CONVERGENCE: OAKLAND VERSES, OAKLAND VOICES

In 2002 the homicide rate in Oakland was rising at an alarming pace. It seemed a natural Youth Radio story, given that so many students at the main headquarters lived in Oakland and that the violence disproportionately affected young people. Youth Radio had a long history of violence prevention work, both as a youth development organization committed to providing young people with meaningful learning experiences and work opportunities, and as a professional production company covering youth violence through young people's eyes.

So it surprised some of the adult producers when Youth Radio's students and newsroom reporters initially said that they didn't want to cover the situation in Oakland. They resented the fact that so many mainstream media outlets, which in the past had never expressed much interest in the lives of Oakland youth, were now pouring into the community to report on the homicide rate, with daily body counts running like sports scores across newspaper pages. Through a series of impromptu conversations and formal meetings, many of the young people said they didn't want to contribute to this kind of coverage.

But Youth Radio's executive producer, Ellin O'Leary, wouldn't give up on the topic; she had a feeling that the young people could come up with a powerful counternarrative to the news they were offended by, and she felt an obligation to use Youth Radio's position within the national media to draw attention to and reframe such an important issue. After several more conversations with the young people, finally they pinpointed what was missing in the mainstream press coverage. The young people

wanted to produce a nuanced account of the effects of the violence on young people and families trying to carry on their lives in a place that felt increasingly unsafe, even as Oakland remained a town they loved and considered home.

Gerald Ward II, a Youth Radio graduate who played a leading role in the organization's broadcast training program while pursuing an undergraduate film degree at San Francisco State University, had lived in Oakland all his life. He was already in the habit of driving a couple of the students home at the end of class on Wednesday and Friday nights, rides on which they witnessed the casualties of violence firsthand. So he decided that on his next trip he'd bring recording equipment. Gerald brainstormed about how he might approach the tape-gathering with students. We wanted listeners to get a sense of what it felt like to walk the streets and how the neighborhood had changed, and he wanted to talk to a range of Oakland residents, including young people and their parents.

Gerald returned the following day with his tape and passed it along to a colleague, who began digitizing it in the studio. Meanwhile, we recorded other conversations at Youth Radio itself during downtime in an attempt to gather as much material as we could in hopes of finding some kind of narrative through-line, a way to bring these voices and scenes together in a story. Young people talked about their personal experiences with violence, the homicide rate, the way the mainstream press was covering it, and also a controversial city proposal to raise the number of police on the streets. The proposal had been linked in the public discourse and in many young people's minds with a "law and order" mentality that neglected violence prevention and diverted support from positive youth programs. One Youth Radio student who was pursuing law enforcement training spoke out in support of the other side of that debate.

Reviewing the tape, it was clear that there were some strong moments and that the young people had shared provocative insights. But where was the story? An unexpected answer came from a nineteen-year-old poet, Ise Lyfe, who came to Youth Radio's studio to record a piece he had written and performed at some poetry slams around the Bay Area. Today, Ise is a well-known spoken-word hip-hop theater artist and the owner of lyfeproductives. At that time, Ise was performing with Youth

Speaks, a nonprofit literary arts program that ran free poetry workshops in classrooms and after school and produced local and national slam competitions.[1] Ise's poem was a retelling of *Romeo and Juliet,* except he recast the characters as Rome and Net Net:

> ISE: *I'm here today to tell a story. A twisted story of ghetto glory. Now, I know you heard of Romeo and Juliet, but I bet you aint heard of Rome and Net Net. See, their story's a bit different. A bit more explicit. So sad, almost all bad. They're young, beautiful and don't even know. Society told him to be a thug, told her to be a 'ho. They victims of a system placed on us years ago.*

Ise's poem resonated with the themes that ran through Gerald's tape, while adding suspense, cadence, and drama.[2] Once we had the poem, putting the story together was pretty easy. We started by dividing the poem into sections where there seemed to be natural breaks, points where we could intercut Ise's unfolding story with clips from the tape. We cut straight from Ise's first verse, transcribed above, to a snippet of conversation between Gerald and Bianca, the student he'd driven home, then back to the poem, then back to the conversation, with ambient street sounds fading in and out to smooth out the transitions.

> GERALD: Where are we right now, Bianca?
>
> BIANCA: 78th avenue.
>
> GERALD: What do you see?
>
> BIANCA: Liquor stores, nail shops, there's a whole bunch of people socializing.
>
> GERALD: This your neighborhood?
>
> BIANCA: Yeah. I try not to go outside at night. Because you never know you might get killed.
>
> ISE: *Let me tell you how Rome and Net Net first met. She was standing at the bus stop, sucking on a lollipop, short skirt, short top—"Girl you need to stop! You wearing summer clothes and it ain't even hot!" Net Net ain't the only one to blame. A number of things make her do what she do. Her mama was never really there. Her dad died when she was two. Yet and still up she grew. And out she grew. Maybe a little too fast because the drunk men on the corner said, "Damn girl, look at your ass." And she laughed, not knowing she being disrespected. She looked up and see Rome coming from the other direction.*

BIANCA: When I get off the bus, all I see, the first thing I see is a prostitute on the corner who's pregnant, and who's like probably twenty-something years old and that's just depressing. I mean it's like, dang, she has so much she could do so much more with her life. I mean if the homicide rate keeps climbing and you can't just live, I mean because it's affecting everybody. I mean, you never know if that bullet is gonna come and hit one of your children.

BIANCA'S MOM: I guess right now we're at a point where I don't like my child to be out at night, because stray bullets are everywhere. You know I had a visitor at my home and stray bullets hit the car, and it could have easily been a person, so it's not a very fair situation.

ISE: *Now here come Rome, fronting on his cellular phone, cause his credit got denied when he tried to get it turned on. Looking dumb, with weed in his socks, crack in his gums, he walk down the street throwing up, where you from. He see Net Net, pretends to hang his phone up. He touch his pager like it's being blown up. He said, "Damn, baby girl, what's your name? What's your steeze? Why you got that skirt on, it's only 40 degrees!" She said, "Please!" But she was getting sick, so she sneezed. She said, "Ha CHOO!" He said, "Bless you." She said, "Naw, forget you! You don't know me well enough to be talking about my clothes and all that kind of stuff." "My bad, baby girl, I'm just looking out for your health. By the way, let me introduce myself. My name is Rome. Can we chop it up, talk on the phone?" "No, why?" "Why? Cause you fine, and I know you tired cause all day you've [been] walking through my mind." No, he didn't use that tired line, but . . . She's trippin, so you know what she say? "Okay, that's so sweet. You're the man I always wanted to meet!"*

Here's where we got stuck. The clips were starting to sound redundant, the pacing predictable, even with Ise's poem driving the narrative forward. Would it work here to get into some of the debates in the tape about broader issues related to police harassment? Gerald had recorded some pretty intense accounts of racial profiling, and one of the young people working on the piece said he thought it was crucial to include these in the story. But another young person helping to produce *Oakland Scenes* worried that tossing in an anecdote about police misconduct at this point might bog down the story, throw off the pacing, and introduce a whole load of issues that we couldn't work out in this one story. If we included tape from a teenager accusing the cops of violence and racism,

wouldn't we then need to introduce a police officer's point of view as well? That would take the piece in a whole different direction, so we opted to save the police tape for a half-hour public affairs show we were developing concurrently to explore the violence in Oakland from a policy perspective.

We called Youth Radio's senior newsroom staff into the studio to listen to what we had so far. They said they wanted to hear more from Gerald, maybe something more personal, to connect with the themes in the poem, a strategy that might also unsettle the interviewer-interviewee dynamic between Gerald and Bianca in some interesting ways. So Gerald headed back into the soundproof recording booth and came out with this, which we mixed into the story right after the passage where Rome and Net Net hook up:

> GERALD: My girlfriend and I have only been together 2 or 3 weeks. We come from such the same background in Oakland. Her mom lives on 94th, and I live on, my mom lives on 23rd. It's interesting because when we were younger, I was kinda a square. We could have been friends, but I also could have been someone that she thought was square. I used to carry a briefcase to school and I wanted to be a scientist. Then I wanted to be a stockbroker. I wasn't trying to be a thug at all.

Then back to the poem:

> ISE: *Net Net get pregnant. Nine months later, the saddest day of the year, she's holding this beautiful baby girl, but her face drops tears as she sings her daughter a sad lullaby song cause Rome died in a drug deal gone terribly wrong. You see, Rome died, never got to see his newborn baby girl's eyes. Now he's not there to wipe the tears from Net Net's eyes. Net Net puts down the baby, the baby cries. Net Net goes in the kitchen and gets a kitchen knife. Net Net slits her wrists not once, Net Net slits her wrists twice. Suicide . . .*

> BIANCA: The only time you talk to your neighbors is if you see them outside and you say "hello" and "goodnight." You never talk about real issues. Things that are important. You can't always like wait around and think that everyone else is gonna do it. You need to take some action for yourself and I think we kinda lost that, our generation.

ISE: *At ten years old, the daughter says both my parents died. At thirteen, she curses the parents she never really knew, "Forget my mama and my daddy, forget him too!" And at sixteen, she's standing at the bus stop, sucking on a lollipop, short skirt, short top, cause ya'll we need to stop. We be wearing summer clothes like it ain't even hot. Leaving our problems to be solved by somebody else. Then we wonder why history always repeats itself. Repeats itself. Why history always repeats itself. Rome and Net Nets in '62, '72, '82, '92, and now in 2002, because through all the madness, we laugh at the ghetto kids on the bus stop. Peace.*[3]

The mixing of Ise's poetics and Gerald's reporting is what distinguished this story from other efforts to draw attention to Oakland's rising violence. Had Youth Radio run the interviews alone, without the poem, we would have been hard-pressed to find a story arc to hold listener interest. Had we run the poem alone, without the interviews, we would not have been able to ground Ise's fictional narrative against the backdrop of the present real-life situation in Oakland.

Converged literacy provides a way to understand the learning process behind this kind of production. Producers needed to open themselves up to genres not typically included in the repertoire of radio conventions, but they also needed to eliminate entire topic areas, such as policy debates and reports of police harassment, which were undeniably relevant to the story but would have sunk it with too much information. The story asked a lot of listeners. No authoritative narrator drew explicit connections between the two interweaving story lines running through the piece, and commuters who usually half-listen to radio news spots on their car stereos needed to pay a different kind of attention to follow the narrative from beginning to end. In this sense, converged literacy spreads from producers to audiences, posing new challenges related to expression and interpretation, forming new relationships between truth and fiction, and reorganizing how young people speak and what goes unsaid. When producers figured out ways to cut between Ise's poem and Gerald's interviews, we were strategically experimenting with the logic governing the broadcast news industry, taking a bet that emotion, lyricism, and make-believe might just convey a stark and undeniable truth, one audience members could get even if they had never attended a poetry slam or set foot on the streets of Oakland. The young producers

generated a new kind of story. Those who have traditionally been dis-enfranchised from digital culture and its expensive appliances emerged here to promote independent media in an age of convergence.

Digital technology has reorganized our lives on intimate and global scales. As the *Emails from Kosovo* series and *Oakland Scenes* foretold, digital technologies and hybrid genres enable young people to frame society's most pressing issues—in those two stories, violence far away and at home—in unexpected ways. Fast-forward two years from *Oakland Scenes,* and young people were once again telling the story of a different kind of war.

OPERATION CONVERGENCE: YOUTH VOICES AT WAR

In January 2004 Youth Radio asked a U.S. Marine in his early twenties to come to our studio in Berkeley to work on a commentary. Our news director, Nishat Kurwa, had read about this young man in an Indian American newspaper. He had joined the U.S. Marines at seventeen and participated in the initial U.S. invasion of Iraq. When Youth Radio got in touch, he had recently returned to the University of California to resume life as a college student, joining his military unit one weekend per month for reserve duty.

While working on the commentary at Youth Radio, this young Marine mentioned that a couple of his buddies back at school had also recently come home from Iraq. I (Lissa) flew down to the campus shortly there-after for a one-day scouting trip to meet the other young vets and explore the possibility of producing a full-blown story—with multiple charac-ters, scene tape, and more—about young military personnel readjust-ing to college life as Iraq war veterans. There, I met Ed and Luis. The Marines took over the mic and interviewed one another about their time in Iraq and what it had been like to come home. Ed was a senior and art major. He drove a humvee as part of a combined anti-armor team, and he described his role in the war as "kill[ing] Iraqi bad guys." In his dorm room, Ed opened the closet and pulled out a portfolio filled with artwork he'd taken from a girls' school in Iraq that had been blown up.[4] Because he was an artist himself, Ed said the pictures helped him understand

"the historical context" surrounding the war for Iraqis and gave him insight into "what they're going through."

Luis was just a freshman, still on active duty. He didn't like talking about his time over there. It was weird, he said, coming home from his deployment to a dorm where the sounds of gunfire and bomb blasts rang through the hallways, blaring from the video game consoles in nearly every room. All three of the young Marines shared photographs they'd taken throughout their deployments, many of which hung on their bedroom walls. Their units had compiled hundreds of pictures, they said, which they circulated among themselves and to friends and family members through CDs and email attachments.

Shortly after this scouting trip, photos of detainee torture leaked from the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, setting off a huge international scandal. The photos pictured male Iraqi prisoners, many naked, simulating sex acts, piled on top of one another, and attached to leashes and wires, with U.S. soldiers looking on, sometimes posing, sometimes snapping pictures. I contacted the Marines to see whether I could come back for a second visit, this time with Youth Radio reporter Belia Mayeno Saavedra, to hear more and look at the photos these Marines had brought home from Iraq.[5] Ed had uploaded his photo collection onto a website he designed, where he added captions containing his own commentary on what he saw and did while deployed.

It was a challenging day, as we tried to make sense of handmade drawings and letters closeted in dorm rooms, snapshots and emails archived on personal computers, and memories digitized on minidisk in order to produce a story that shed new light on a crisis that had captured the attention of the world. Some of the most vituperative debates in the U.S. press centered on who deserved blame for the acts pictured in those photographs: young, low-level prison guards or their higher-ups. Notably, reports of the abuse had circulated for more than a year before the photographs surfaced: "It was the photographs that made all this 'real' to Bush and his associates. Up to then, there had been only words, which are easier to cover up in our age of infinite digital self-reproduction and self-dissemination, and so much easier to forget" (Sontag, 2004).

Citizens around the world struggled to analyze the relationship between the photos and other texts and narratives vying to tell the story

of an unfolding war. The Bush administration rushed to contain the scandal by framing the abuse at Abu Ghraib as a reprehensible, unauthorized aberration carried out by a handful of misguided soldiers. There were many in the United States and elsewhere who balked at this argument, describing the torture of Iraqi prisoners as "neither exceptional nor singular" (Puar, 2005, p. 15). Interestingly, although the Marines went to great lengths to distance themselves from the behaviors of the young men and women in U.S. uniforms captured in those photographs, they aligned themselves with arguments, often emanating from those deeply critical of the war effort, that the Abu Ghraib prison guards' actions were anything but exceptional. Only civilians watching the war on TV from the safety of living-room couches would be surprised, the young men maintained, in what became the opening scene of Belia's story.

Picturing War, by Belia Mayeno Saavedra

Part 1

BELIA: A year ago, Former Marine reservist Ed [last name] returned from Iraq, after taking part in the U.S. invasion. Now he's back at University of California at Riverside, a twenty-six-year-old art student. Here's what he says about the stories of prison abuse coming out of Iraq. . . .

ED: *It's like Chris Rock said, I wouldn't do it, but I understand. I'm not saying I approve of it, but I understand the conditions that led up to them doing it.*

BELIA: Ed's buddy Luis [last name], a shy twenty-one-year-old, resumed his freshman year at Riverside when he returned from Iraq a year ago.

(Sound comes up . . . bit of quiet laughter, Luis: "Oh yeah, I remember that, but you know what happened. . . . ")

BELIA: Luis was a field radio operator for a logistics unit in Iraq. . . . He says sometimes they had to round up Iraqis and detain them. And that when you see someone as your enemy, and you feel like they're going to kill you, you start to look at them with hate. At some point, Luis says, you're going to lose your judgment, even if it's just for a minute or two. And it's up to you to know how to manage it, he says. He tells this story.

LUIS: *I think we picked up prisoners, and put barbed wire around them. I recall one of the corporals offering me an opportunity to go in there and abuse some of them. I think it was Corporal—*

MARINE: *No, don't name him.*

FEMALE VOICE: *No. Don't.*

MARINE: *Don't name him.*

LUIS: *He said, Hey, [last name], look, there's one of those Iraqi guys. Wanna go in there and kick em? I thought about it for a split second, but then I guess my judgment came into play, and I said, that's not the right thing to do. Just go back to my five-ton, and if I'm called upon to do something, gotta do my job.*

BELIA: When you ask him about what happened at Abu Ghraib, Luis says the soldiers responsible should be treated harshly, possibly including higher-ups. But like his buddy Ed, Luis says the abuses don't really surprise him.

LUIS: *People see it on TV, they're not living it, so they find it surprising, "oh, this is obscene." But then, you tell me one thing that happens during war that is not obscene.*

Just weeks after the first pictures of prison torture came out, the Youth Radio interviews revealed that prisoner abuse was by no means isolated to Abu Ghraib or carried out without supervisors' knowledge. Luis did not share pictures of prisoner abuse, but he did describe it. More than that, he was just about to reveal the name of the corporal who reportedly invited him to "go in there" and kick "one of those Iraqi guys." His fellow Marine stopped him: "Don't name him. . . . Don't name him." No surprise there. But the Marine's voice is not the only one you hear if you listen closely to this moment in the story. You can also pick up another voice, a female one, mine (Lissa). I too say, "No. Don't." I had to listen back to the tape a couple of times to believe I had actually done that—stopped Luis from naming a higher-up in his chain of command who had allegedly instigated detainee abuse.[6] Maybe I thought I was protecting the story; we'd had military higher-ups kill pieces in the past.[7] Or maybe I thought I was somehow protecting Luis himself. That's never the explicit goal in Youth Radio's production model. We approach young people as agents whose voices should be amplified, not vulnerable populations in need of our benevolent protection. But if the media production process itself creates risk for young participants—whether they are sources, as was the case here, or reporters like Belia—that complicates the question of responsibility. If a youth media organization's mission is to serve and promote youth voice, to what extent are participants, young people and adults, obligated to try to prevent negative consequences for young people drawn into any given media story?

When faced with a question like this one, it may seem beside the point

to invoke literacy. And yet in many ways literacy is precisely the point here, because literacy is what all of us implicated in this story depended on, in our personal and collaborative decisions about what stories to tell and how to tell them. Making those decisions required converged literacy to the extent that we were working across media forms (sound, snapshots, websites) and navigating various institutional contexts as well, seeking ways to comply with and sometimes subvert protocols governing mass-media outlets, military chains of command, and youth development agencies. In the end, we strove to tell this story in a way that framed individual young people's actions within larger cultural and political contexts. Belia and I kept coming back to this question: How can we make this story about these young men, but not about these young men, about the role of torture and abuse in the context of militarism, about new ways that soldiers are documenting their wartime experiences, and about the experiences of young people selectively recruited for war (Mariscal, 2005)? That is a lot—perhaps too much—to ask of a four-minute radio story produced and broadcast in a matter of days. And yet that is the least we should ask of a larger body of work, from Youth Radio and the youth media field, covering the most difficult and important issues confronting young people at any given moment in history.

These issues, and the literacy required to understand and act on them, have grown ever more complicated as a result of new digital technologies, as further explored in the second half of Belia's story.

Picturing War, by Belia Mayeno Saavedra
Part 2

   (Bring up computer sound . . .)

   BELIA: And as we've seen over the past weeks, the graphic images of war are not only televised, they're digitized. After Ed [last name] was called to Iraq, one of the first things he did was stock up on camera supplies.

   ED: *We spent a lot of time patrolling, driving around, so I'd whip out the camera, real quick, take a picture. I mean, we wouldn't be taking out the camera when we were doing anything mission-critical or important. But I mean, half the time we spent on the road, we got to see a lot of Iraq. . . . But I just took the pictures as a record of my travels, I guess. Because me going to Iraq, going to war and back, was the only real adventure I'll ever have. (laugh)*

BELIA: These reservists say, when they come home from Iraq it's normal for them to scan their pictures onto a computer, email them around, or burn them onto a CD. It's a digital yearbook of a military unit's shared experience in Iraq. Ed put *his* photos on the web.

(Bring up sound. Ed: "Here's—okay, we're gonna go in, and it says—and here's a link to it . . . ")

BELIA: Some of the pictures are just pretty shots of the desert and the ruins in Babylon. But many of them are graphic shots of charred dead bodies, or truncated torsos lying in the sand. The photos show us *what* he saw, and the captions he added tell us *how* he saw it. Ed and his fellow Marines nicknamed one burnt corpse "Mr. Crispy."

ED: *When I first saw dead bodies, I was like, I've never seen dead bodies like that before, so out of curiosity, I whipped out the camera and stuff. I was in the car, we were still driving the whole time, I didn't get out and say, oh, Kodak moment. Just gave it to my driver, my guy on top, the gunner, take pictures, basically what it was, you find your photo ops when you can. . . .*

BELIA: Ed points to another shot, one of Americans in camouflage giving candy to Iraqi children, and his caption reads "Hey kids, here's some candy. Now make sure you don't sneak up on me tonight or I'll have to shoot you."

(Bring up sound. Ed: "So here's a picture of blown up tanks, big old statue of AK 47s on an Iraqi flag, that's pretty good. . . . ")

BELIA: Ed's grisly photos and captions are disturbing. And what may have started as a personal travelogue is now part of a growing stream of images soldiers are bringing home, changing the way the world sees this war.

In youth media practice and literacy theory, we often frame technology as a means of social connection and a tool with which young people can exercise agency.[8] Ironically, though, the young Marines also seemed to rely on technology for evidence of innocence, a way to *disavow* connection and *deny* agency. Ed insisted that in snapping pictures, he wasn't really doing anything, except witnessing: "I just took it as I saw it . . . like a news reporter who takes pictures and brings them back home. . . . " Like a news reporter, and also like a tourist with a gun. Ed described his visit to Babylon this way: "Pretend Disneyland is empty, and you got your M-16, and you get to check it out, but you still gotta be careful, because someone could come out of Space Mountain and kill your ass."

Although Ed described his photography as a hands-off documentation exercise, the captions on his website told a different story. Clearly he was doing something by juxtaposing his commentary with the photos. During our visit, Ed booted up his computer and launched into a tour of his site, "My Spring Break 2003." The image on the front page depicted "a bunch of girls wearing burkas and bikinis holding up AK 47s, and then in the background is a picture of oil burning in the water, and then the mountains are burning in the background."

Ed's website begs the question, Was he exercising converged literacy here? He deployed digital technologies, combining and juxtaposing various forms, formats, and genres, to express an experience he had lived through, one that challenged the mainstream media's representation of the war in which he fought. He exploited new media methods of distribution for his photographs and commentary, inviting comments and participation from visitors. In these ways, Ed exhibited some of the very skills and habits many contemporary educators and media scholars advocate, as we tout the virtues of digital media production. And yet the product of his particular experiments was deeply troubling, shaped and disciplined by forces that destroy young people's lives.

Further complicating these issues is Ed's own way of explaining the purpose of his website. "The point of the captions, it was a critique of my spring break, and everyone else's," he said. Belia and I kept trying to push him on this point, but we couldn't quite figure it out. What was he trying to critique? In the end, reflecting back on our own story, we have asked ourselves the same question. To what extent can a story like this one function as a kind of critique, even if some of the perspectives it revealed conform to rather than challenge ideologies that make life more dangerous for young people who are already marginalized?

This line of questioning cuts to the heart of the relationship between converged literacy and engaged citizenship by highlighting the fact that such a relationship is never straightforward or guaranteed. What distinguishes a place like Youth Radio from an individual young person uploading photos or creating a blog is that Youth Radio is a collective effort to promote critical thinking, support positive youth development, convey underreported and media-distorted community experiences, and contribute media products marked by journalistic rigor and compelling analysis.

That is not to say that every story in Youth Radio's archive achieves these ends. Some might even argue that Ed's website, by virtue of its uncensored representation of war (compared to the tightly controlled mainstream press), might in fact do more than the Youth Radio report to provoke new avenues of dialogue. But in creating that story, Youth Radio producers aim to promote an informed and rigorous public discourse grounded in truth and evidence, while at the same time supporting a meaningful learning experience for those involved, young people and adults, whether they agree with one another or not. It is in these ways that convergence in the technical and textual sense can transform into a kind of literacy.

For Belia, exercising that literacy meant thinking deeply not just about how she framed the story overall, but how she chose her individual words. In preparing this story, she struggled to find the right adjective to describe the photographs Ed brought back from Iraq. In the popular discourse, "horrifying" seemed the word of choice to characterize the Abu Ghraib photos.

> BELIA: But in the interview, Ed kept saying, "You have to love the war, because if you don't love the war, you're gonna go crazy." And I kept hearing that over and over in my head as I was looking at the things he did and his website, and the ways he talked about the war. His perspective was disturbing, it did disturb us. But the use of "horrifying," something about that felt very removed, like, "Oh, look at that horrible thing that person is doing over there that I have nothing to do with." Because even though I didn't send him to Iraq, in the larger scheme of things, living as an American citizen and benefiting in certain ways from the military industrial complex and all the "isms" and crazy things we're all pulled into just by virtue of where we live and who we are, I think that "horrifying" and other words that were more removed or felt more distant were maybe a little too passive. But we did have to choose something that showed, it's not like this was okay with us.

In reflecting on her word choice for this story, Belia emphasizes her own connection to the story she reports, explicitly refusing a position of passive detachment. And this, perhaps, is among the most important achievements a young person can work toward in a project geared to promote converged literacy: claiming a right to participate, as an active agent, in living, telling, and framing every historical moment's defining stories.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have framed converged literacy in three ways. The first centers on production: an ability to *make and understand* boundary-crossing and convention-breaking texts, such as radio stories composed from digital correspondence (*Emails from Kosovo*), music clips (Youth Radio's Core class), spoken-word poetry (*Oakland Scenes*), and photos with captions uploaded to the web (*Picturing War*). These stories defy expectations and reach beyond superficial meanings and modes of representation. Preparing young people to tell these kinds of stories means approaching media education with new rigor and a different set of standards, as we can no longer settle for outcomes that support critical consumption or production in the old media landscape. This work requires continually redesigning curricula to stay relevant to youth and their varied engagements with digital culture and politics.

The second dimension of converged literacy centers on distribution: knowing how to *draw and leverage* public interest in the stories you want to tell. In producing each of the stories featured here, young producers and their adult collaborators described new relationships: between a boy in Berkeley and a girl in Kosovo; between Rome and Net Net; between U.S. Marines and the Iraqi youngsters they pictured as both enemies and recipients of liberation. These individual relationships, captured through sound, image, and word, had wider cultural implications related to militarism, love, and violence. Producers were able to draw public attention to these issues by framing them in new ways and by distributing their stories across a range of outlets, including radio, web, and community forums. In the case of *Emails from Kosovo* and *Picturing War,* the world was already obsessed with the specific topic of each story: the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Young producers seized on this public preoccupation to bring new facts, insights, and analyses to those themes. *Oakland Scenes* was different. The national mainstream press at the time paid little attention to the mostly black and brown young people dying every day in Oakland, except perhaps through sensationalized coverage, so the challenge for this story was to create public interest in a topic of pressing, though persistently overlooked, importance.

This brings us to the third framing of converged literacy presented here, which centers on impact. Converged literacy entails the material and imaginative resources to *claim and exercise* the right to use media to promote justice, variously defined. None of the stories described in this chapter sacrifices journalistic rigor for the sake of a political agenda, but all reveal that young people can tell stories that support equity and enfranchisement. Each disrupts narratives of exclusion that promote the self-interest of those already occupying positions of privilege and power. We emphasize resources here because it makes no sense to add "converged media literacy" as yet another requirement young people need to meet if they are to qualify as full-blown citizens, without addressing the vast disparities in their access to the tools, networks, and experiences that prepare them to exercise that citizenship. When young people are only selectively initiated and integrated into the processes and practices of converged literacy, their lives and stories are missing or misrepresented in the public sphere.

Convergence, as we have said, means that media forms that used to inhabit separate spaces now coexist in single sites. Spoken-word poetry intercuts with street corner interviews. Digital photographs illustrate military diaries and undermine efforts to suppress the most obscene dimensions of war. Convergence has also changed the rules of the media distribution game. To be media literate today means knowing not only how to produce rich content, but also how to create demand and the imperative for audiences to share and disseminate what you've done across their own dispersed networks and to stay in the conversation during the story's digital afterlife. These conditions for media production and distribution raise new intellectual, ethical, and political challenges about the value of converged literacy's products, for the young person who made them and for their varied audiences. A piece of media might contain all the technical elements of convergence and yet contribute very little to anyone's literacy, if literacy implies a capacity to understand and critique the way the world is organized by virtue of being textualized. It is in the combination of the two—convergence and literacy—that there is the greatest potential for making change.