Camila Makes a Difference

Rachel Riggs

This story is fictional.

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. According to digitalinclusion.org, *digital equity* is when all people and communities have the technology they need to fully participate in our society, democracy, and economy.

2. What or who has helped you get access to technology and the internet? Have there been obstacles? Describe them. Your ability to navigate around these obstacles is called *digital resilience*.

Many Talents and Skills

Camila lives in Kentucky. She is from Cuba. She is a single woman and has big goals for her future. Right now, she works as a room attendant at a hotel. Camila has a lot of talents and skills. She is very friendly and she is a creative thinker. When there is a problem at the hotel, she thinks of unique solutions to fix it. Camila is bilingual, too. She speaks Spanish and Haitian Creole. She is learning English, and she practices every day.

A Major Obstacle: Digital Divide

There is one big problem that Camila has. It's called the digital divide. "Digital" relates to technology and "divide" means separation. The digital divide is what separates the people who can connect or have access to things online and those who can't. This divide is serious. It impacts access to important services, jobs, education, and connecting with other people.

For Camila, the digital divide makes it difficult to make doctor appointments, take English classes, and talk to family in Cuba. She connects to the internet on her phone at work, but it's not a good place to do her personal calls or studies. When she gets home, the connection is weak, and sometimes there isn't a connection at all. She can't study, read the news, or talk to her family at home. She's separated from the online world.

Camila needs to find reliable internet access and a laptop. After doing some research, she finds out that she lives in a "redlined" neighborhood. "Redlined" means that the internet service companies do not put good internet in Camila's community. Redlining is unfair. It blocks communities from the services they need. It's not just the internet, though. Camila needs a device with a larger screen, like a laptop or desktop computer. She can't do everything she needs to do on her smartphone. She wants to practice using a computer so she can get a job at the hotel reception desk.

Helping Herself and Her Community

Camila is very good with technology. She has a lot of digital skills. She posts images and videos on social media. At work, Camila writes emails for her co-workers and helps them fill out online forms. Camila volunteers at a community center. She gives digital literacy classes to teach others how to use the internet. She teaches them how to search for information, apply for jobs online, and use video calls to talk to their families.

People need more than digital skills to have digital equity, though. They need the internet and devices. Camila knows how to use the computer but she needs to have one at home. If she gets a

WORLD EDUCATION

computer and internet at home, she will be able to study, find and apply for new jobs, read the news and talk to her family.

Fighting for Digital Inclusion

Camila has ideas for how she can help her community. She wants to help them build *digital resilience* to adapt to the digital world. She uses her language and culture to create resources that other immigrant families and individuals can use. She shares information about the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which makes it possible for people to apply for low-cost internet and devices.

Camila is a special person in her community. She cares about others and works hard to help everyone. She is learning more about digital inclusion so her community can be part of a digital society. Camila is helping her community bridge the *digital divide*.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What digital skills does Camila have?

2. What is the problem in Camila's neighborhood? And how is Camila helping her community?

3. Go to bit.ly/tcadev or scan the QR code with your phone to practice the vocabulary from the story.

4. Explore these resources:
- Learn more about technology at the Digital Skills Library: https://digitalskillslibrary.org/
- Choose a computer for your accessibility needs at AbilityNet: https://abilitynet.org.uk/news-blogs/how-choose-computer-your-accessibility-needs
- Find non-profits that refurbish computers at AFTRR: https://aftrr.org/map-locator/
- Find an affordable computer at PCs for People: https://www.pcsforpeople.org/get-tech/
- Find low-cost offers for internet in your area at EveryoneOn: https://www.everyoneon.org/find-offers and getinternet.gov.
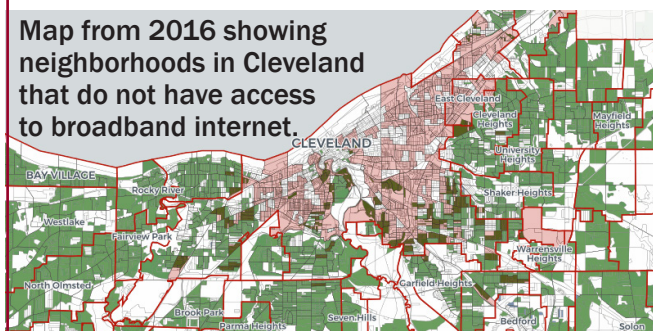

Map from the 1930s showing neighborhoods in Cleveland that were excluded from mortgage benefits.
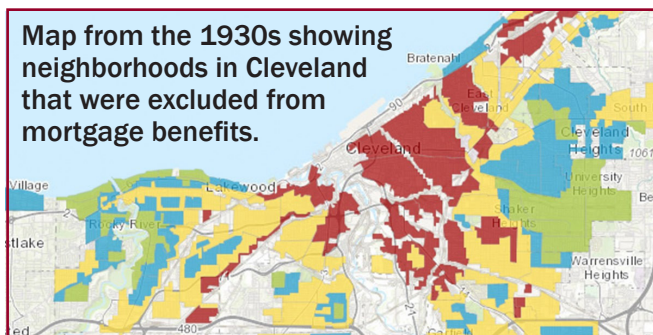
As part of the New Deal in the 1930s, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) offered aid to people to buy homes. However, it was mostly white people who benefited from this aid. The FHA thought it was too risky to loan money to Black people. The neighborhoods marked in red are where mostly Black people lived. The FHA refused to offer them these subsidized loans. This practice was called "redlining." Read more at https://www.history.com/news/housing-segregation-new-deal.

Source: Case Western University, retrieved from https://www.communitysolutions.com/access-denied-impact-clevelands-digital-divide-students/

Map from 2016 showing neighborhoods in Cleveland that do not have access to broadband internet.

Big internet companies are more likely to provide high quality internet access to wealthier communities. Communities with fewer economic resources have less access to fast internet, and so they have less access to all the resources available online. This is called "digital redlining." The area in red on this map is where more than 35% of the people live in poverty. There is little access to high speed internet in these neighborhoods.

Source: https://www.digitalinclusion.org/blog/2017/03/10/atts-digital-redlining-of-cleveland/

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