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Response to Social Movements

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Response to Social Movements

2020 was a significant year because the world witnessed a change in social activism due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. As the Black Lives Matter campaign, social movements started at the backdrop of skyrocketing unemployment, uncertainty, and anxiety among the citizens. The crisis made apparent inherent social issues that have not been addressed for an extended period. That explains why every sector of the economy struggles, as people become more nervous and uncertain about their future. At the same time, different governments have been exposed to the pandemic. Amid uncertainties, where lockdowns and quarantines are the norms, the space and avenue for social movements have changed. Cyberspace is emerging as an arena for social movements, as activists and citizens adopt digital technologies to organize and mobilize civil actions like the Black Lives Matter and anti-lockdown marches.

Social media platforms have opened up the space for active social engagements while also leading to misinformation. Through social media, acts of civil disobedience have occurred where citizens have mobilized to demonstrate against lockdowns and mandatory quarantines. At the same time, whereas social sites have had a huge impact on the sharing of information among citizens, some individuals have used them to misinform the public. One positive factor that has progressed in this debate is the engagement of young people in social movements and activism. For instance, Cristina Flesher talks about the six teenage women who mobilized a march of more than ten thousand individuals following the death of George Floyd and the Friday's for Future drive (Fominaya, 2020). These protests were organized and started online by young people who previously would not have considered participating in social movements. From these actions, the youth have emerged as a powerful force in the social movement because they are ingenious in coming up with different approaches to help social movements achieve their intended purpose.

Moreover, with racism and covid-19 at the forefront of the debate, the meaning of protest is bound to change. For instance, as more citizens realize that some of the societal issues are intrinsic to the societal fabric, we must underscore the role of the citizen in shaping the future. Social movements have progressed because different entities call for better outcomes and fortunes to make society a better place. In the 21st Century, social networks will change social activism by offering new avenues for participating in protests even when the streets are closed. Secondly, the internet will give activists another avenue for amplifying their voice, especially when there is outrage among the masses. Furthermore, amid a pandemic as lethal as Covid-19, the public has defied the health guidelines and come out on the streets to advocate for meaningful change as we advance.

By the time George Floyd was murdered, American society had already started the calls for equality. His murder proved to be pivotal because it made people come out in large numbers to call for an end to endemic division and white supremacy. People are angry with their government worldwide, not just in America alone. They are also worried about the future of the world, hence the solidarity that was witnessed when the rest of the world joined in protesting the death of George Floyd. The worldwide Black lives Matter movement was successful because the world is one large community, where what affects an individual in one country resonates with people in another continent. The acts of civil disobedience witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic, like the Black Matter Movement, should send a clear message to political players that the power is with the people who elect them, hence, by extension, donating their powers to the elected representatives. Society demands to be heard, and the people in.

Through avenues like WhatsApp and Facebook, groups have been formed to discuss some of the inherent societal issues affecting people. At the same time, social media has created

avenues for the spread of conspiracy theories like those suggesting that wearing masks is not good because it results in difficulty in breathing. Others suggest that Covid-19 is an illusion. However, it is crucial to note that such instances are normal. The public has suffered huge consequences due to the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories, going by the number of deaths witnessed due to Covid-19. Politicians also like avenues where misinformation thrives because they use it as a weapon to spread lies and propaganda. This is the case witnessed when President Trump and Bolsonaro ignored the warnings issued by health experts. President Trump even suggested that people should be injected with hand sanitizers. To my surprise, some public members were discussing the possibility of implementing that erroneous suggestion not backed by any scientific data.

To sum it up, I concur with Cristina Flesher when she says that the long-term effects of the current social movements are uncertain and difficult to predict (Fominaya, 2020). The nature and forms of the social movement being witnessed presently take different approaches, including social media and different contexts. However, one certain thing is that whichever the form or avenue used to champion societal change, the public shall continue to advocate for more government responses to widespread indemnities affecting them. One of them involves the killing of African-Americans by law enforcement agents. In addition to that, young individuals who have learned that they possess the power to advocate for social change because of their numbers and the technological spaces within their disposal will also be led by young individuals who have learned that they possess the power to advocate for social change.

Reference

Fominaya, C. F. (2020). *New Spaces for Social Movements: Defiance of 2020*. Institute Montaigne.

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