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Assignment #1

**Social Media: my public identity and a reflection of myself**

*“At the end of the day, I’m a human being and I just think that’s what it is. Challenging stereotypes by just being who I am.”*

*Tinie Tempah.*

Challenging viewpoints is my nature because I am always trying to debate ideas to verify their truthfulness. This mind set has been carried on into my Facebook page. I enjoy sharing more than my life experiences on Facebook. I share my identity online.

On my Facebook page, my profile picture shows the way I want to portray myself to other people by opposing to the stereotype of an Engineering student. I am studying Electrical Engineering and I am conscious about a few of the Engineering Myths. Although the most popular ones are that Engineers do not have soft skills and are not creative people, I am showing on my profile picture that I am sitting on the street in the Fillmore Jazz Festival in San Francisco. Additionally, I am wearing sunglasses and a snapback with a crowd in the background because I want my Facebook friends to see that I have an educated knowledge in music. Commonly, jazz music is a genre listened by people who really understand about music history and appreciate music theory. In contrast, math and science oriented people are less likely to appreciate this subjective form of expressing ideas. Regardless of the mathematical background of music, adding “emotion” and understanding what the musician and compositor are trying to convey takes a skill that is not developed in a classroom environment.

A different way I challenge these stereotypes is that I am currently pursuing a minor in French. By taking literature classes in French, I nurture my creativeness and develop the communication skills that Engineering students lack. Furthermore, I get educated on social issues: racism, immigration, war, and gender equality. I can keep track of how much my cultural awareness has grown since I have taken French classes because when I have cultural conversations with my Engineering peers I usually get frustrated by the lack of seriousness and interest on the social issues that are happening around the world.

Another label that I challenge by learning a third language is related to a political matter that has been a trending topic since last year, the infamous claim that “Mexico is not sending their best” by the presidential candidate. My hometown is Monterrey, Mexico, which is 220 kilometers from the border with Deep South Texas. Throughout my childhood, my family moved continuously between Mexico and the United States. As a result, I had a bicultural experience where I got to understand and live in both cultures. I had the ability to develop communication skills in two languages. Consequently, the aforementioned claim to Mexicans who are immigrating into the country is a direct attack to myself. I constantly have the premonition that people look down on the entire immigrant community and me when they support this political idea. Another common derogatory statement is that immigrants are not able to learn the language spoken in this country. As a result, I committed to demonstrate the supporters of this thought that I, in representation of everyone else who did not have the opportunity to get an education, was going to prove them wrong.

In order to provide evidence that their damaging stereotypes are unrealistic, a few months ago I posted on my Facebook wall a picture with a strong political statement. In the picture, there is a bed with a University of Southern California (USC) Football blanket. Additionally, there is a USC banner and a Mexican flag hanging from the wall. The picture was posted at the beginning of the summer the day before my summer job started. Furthermore, the post mentions that I will be working in a research laboratory in the Electrical Engineering department at Stanford University with the mentorship of a Mexican professor who studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Moreover, I quoted Donald Trump’s statement about Mexico when he announced his candidacy for presidency and Emily Austen’s, a Fox Sports Anchor, racist remarks where she doubted about Mexicans’ intellectual abilities.

This declaration on social media is my response to the hatred and bigotry that is constantly gaining popularity and support nurtured by ignorance. By using myself as an example, I am transforming my Facebook profile as social space that is starting online activism and welcoming a conversation about public issues. The messaged was delivered successfully by providing additional reference to the post, the two quotes. As a response to my post, my Facebook friends made supporting comments and disapproved the quasi-Nazi citations.

Usually, I do not share my academic and professional achievements because people might perceive it as bragging about my achievements. Although sharing them makes me feel like I am standing out and, possibly, letting people know how good I am at a specific task, I am constantly sharing those types of post on social media because I want to illustrate the misconceptions towards immigrants. I have been a target of these damaging statements since I was in elementary school. Regrettably the insults came from everyone, even American-born Mexicans, Mexican-Americans. Even at USC, schoolmates make offensive and derogatory comments on my origins, even though their parents or grandparents were born in Mexico. However, I was committed to modestly accomplishing my goals without making them public. All of this changed radically a year ago, when Trump announced his candidacy. He categorized everyone with the same label. As a result, everyone found a common enemy and now all the minority communities are taking his words are threats. Therefore, I opted to share online my successes.

Before the right wing candidate had interest in the White House, my Facebook profile only had pictures of family vacations and social gatherings with friends, but his injurious statements gave to my Facebook page a political and intellectual nuance. In a certain manner, social media reflects my identity transformation and the different ways my opinions approach worldwide events.

Another post that enhances the idea of having a Facebook page that exposes the social issues in the country is an anecdote I posted about a Santa Clara County Police Officer who stopped me when I was walking in Palo Alto, California with two bicycles and tried to intimidate me by grabbing his belt near his gun and pepper spray. The post describes that the bicycles belonged to two friends and I was going to park them in front of a Starbucks, as requested by them. When I was walking towards Starbucks, I stopped before crossing a street intersection because a police car parked right next to me. Next, the policeman got out of the car, walked towards me, and asked, while having a smirk on his face, if the bicycles were mine. I replied that the owners were my friends. Then, he requested my identification. I asked him what was the reason he was asking for my identification if I was not doing anything wrong, I was complying, and I responded all of his answers. The police officer then grabbed his belt and placed his right hand near the gun and the left hand on top of the pepper spray. He looked at my in the eye and with a boastful smile he said that it was strange to see a person walking with two bicycles. He said: “Bike theft is a big issue around the area and a person walking with two bikes looks suspicious.” I complied and showed him my driver’s license. After inspecting it, he let me go.

The majority of Facebook users who commented on that post were young people who shared similar experiences and questioned the policeman’s argument. My Facebook friends wrote that the fact I looked suspicious walking with two bikes was because I was a Hispanic walking in a rich neighborhood where is rare to see individuals from a minority ethnic group. Furthermore, another friend said that the officer was asking for my identification to check if I was undocumented. Additionally, a USC alumnus commented that unfortunately being stopped by the police became almost a routine for him and he explained thoroughly how to file a complaint against that police officer in the nearest police station. The response of my Facebook friends was in general the acknowledgement of institutionalized racism and, as a consequence, the usage of the term “second-class citizen” to describe members from targeted communities. With this post, I used Facebook as a forum to exchange ideas and experiences.

My Facebook page is a portrait of my thoughts and myself. It depicts how I have been changing through time and how I like to question the veracity of ideas. If someone scrolls down my wall, they will be able to determine when I started my education at USC because at that moment is when I started to get culturally aware and, consequently, my posts on social media changed drastically. I gradually stopped sharing YouTube music videos and slowly became immersed in the world of online activism. Therefore, every single picture I post on Facebook is a truthful image of myself. Furthermore, the ideas I discuss on social media are way of expressing my experiences, morals, and values. Even though I can create a false image of myself on Facebook, I let everyone see who I really am and I get pleasure from challenging stereotypes by providing real and concrete evidence.