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Writing 150 64455

November 19, 2016

Assignment #4

**Black Lives Matter: Social Media’s Civil Rights Movement**

Police brutality is a major social issue in the United States where members from the African-American, Native-American, and Hispanic communities are targeted. Before smart phones were available to everyone, it was harder to acknowledge this issue since people would not be aware of the problem. Currently, police brutality is publicly acknowledged because it is recorded with phones. Regularly, these videos are used as proof that the victims did not resist to the arrest. Therefore, technology and social media have empowered people to share their opinions and information regarding police brutality. As a result, there is more spreading of information; however, there has been less engagement in action. Milennials, people who are between their late teenage years and early thirties, assume they become activists by sharing information online, but they do not take action on it. Social media merely helps the citizens to acknowledge police brutality. Before social media, demonstrators would go out to the streets and make bystanders hear their voices.

According to the Washington Post, there was nine hundred ninety fatal shooting in 2015. Mote than forty percent of the ninety-three unarmed civilians that were shot by the police were African-Americans. This is an alarming number due to the fact that African-Americans are only thirteen percent of the country’s population. As a result, Black Lives Matter movement is a response to the disproportional murder of African-Americans by the police force.

In 2012, Trayvon Martin was assassinated by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer, with a gun. A year later, Zimmerman was acquitted of second-degree murder. Social media users responded by debuting the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on Twitter. Furthermore, this hashtag was used in sign during protests. In 2014, Michael Brown was shot by Ferguson, Missouri police officer Darren Wilson. #BlackLivesMatter was widely used in social media to share videos and pictures of the Ferguson’s protests. Unfortunately during a protest in Dallas in the summer of 2016, Micah Xavier Johnson shot police officers. He killed five officers and injured nine officers and two civilians. Johnson, an Army Reserve Afghan War veteran, argued he was seeking revenge of all the shooting of black men.

Social media, the same technology that empowered the Black Lives Matter movement, lessen the movement’s credibility by democratization of journalism. After Johnsons’ attack in Texas, the movement was stained and labeled as an anti-white racist movement by conservatives; however, Black Lives Matter responded that they identify themselves as a non-violent civil right movement that want to stop Black genocide authorized by the institutionalized racism.

Regrettably, social media exacerbates the issue by giving conservatives a mean to express themselves. As a backlash against the Black Lives Matter movement, the hashtag #AllLivesMatter was created in social media. This hashtag represents the conservatives’ viewpoint that argues that not only black lives matter, but also their lives matter as well. Furthermore, they called Black Lives Matters an overreaction, riot, and violent protest. This is an unfortunate example on how American society is divided by racial issues. The response of the African-American population to the All Lives Matter movement has been negative. The movement seeks for a way to ensure that Black people are not being unjustly killed. Moreover, Black Lives Matter leaders are avoiding violent protests because they are trying to overthrow the stereotype that exists with designating Black individuals as angry persons.

Besides the goal of ending with African-American stereotypes, Black Lives Matter follows the example and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who was a non-violent protestor. Dr. King emphasized in his speeches that non-violence was the strongest approach to minimize hate and make the most progress. Furthermore, he believed that organized non-violence resistance is the most powerful weapon that oppressed people can used to unleash from the bondage of oppression. He condemned violence, because it did not promote means to dialogue and resolve the conflicts, and resignation, because cooperation is a moral obligation.

Social media’s movement can be perceived as having a less effective result due to the lack of engagement; however, during the Civil Rights Movement United States citizens lacked of basic human rights. For example, racial discrimination did not allow people to vote. Another former issue in the country was discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Even though minority group members are second-class citizens and police brutality is a major concern in American society, Americans do not lack of basic human rights as they did before the Civil Rights Movement. Therefore, engagement in demonstrations might not be needed because the country does not need laws that protect its citizens’ rights. In contrast, education in cultural awareness is needed to change the antiquated perception of different ethnic groups. Social media might be the best way of educating the audience by creating an environment where different ideas and viewpoints are welcomed.