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Introduction

In today's culture, social networking has become indispensable. It's especially important to note that social media is a critical tool for establishing social connections and disseminating information. What's also fascinating is that it doesn't matter where one is in the world, one could still reach out to others, broaden one's personal knowledge, and spread awareness. This last point, on the other hand, is a double-edged sword: while it is true that a wider net of connection is generated among individuals with the primary goal of spreading awareness, the dissemination of fake news, news without a credible source, and even hate speeches has increased significantly as a result of the fact that almost everyone has access to the internet and, without a doubt, the liberty to discuss their thought processes. Regardless, the internet, especially social media, is a valuable tool for forming connections between people and disseminating information around the world. In reality, political interaction is intended to function as an exchange of representative public values, values that are primarily created by interactions among individuals, the media, and politics. Individuals are now expected to be politically engaged: the introduction of online networking has made it easier for people to participate in politics. This tends to be particularly true in the case of traditionally

disadvantaged communities such as African Americans. These groups have also been shown to use the internet not only to increase their sociopolitical engagement, but also to speak out against injustice and discrimination. To provide a proper explanation for minorities' attitudes toward the internet, particularly for what concern digital platforms, it is necessary to emphasize the internet's role in people's daily lives yet again. Globalization has resulted in extreme interdependence not just between nations but also among individuals. The establishment of a structure of communication, centered on the integration of cultures, political views, economies, and technology has revolutionized the entire world and has overthrown plurality in favor of increased cooperation. Technology is without a doubt one of the most important factors that has aided the globalization process in recent decades. Globalization has historically sown the seeds of migration flows from developing nations to the developed and industrialized world, setting the groundwork for the establishment of ''melting pot'' phenomena in countries such as United States. The development of more liberal societies and the spread of common practices in many countries seemed to benefit the vast majority of people, who gradually began to integrate into newly globalized societies, progressively began to emerge from extreme poverty, and eventually experienced an increase in education. As a result, globalization appears to be an opportunity for all, regardless of any cultural and historical backgrounds. These last characteristics tend to be particularly relevant in terms of global communication, as globalization tends to disintegrate both concrete and abstract barriers between nations, not only in terms of national and cultural backgrounds, but also in terms of improving individual opportunities regardless of ethnicity or geographical region. International and global interaction, on the other hand, can be exceptionally hard: cultural identities continue to play an important role in the globalized world, both in terms of a sense of belonging and in terms of the hegemonic influence brought about by globalization.

Specifically, the idea of global communication has taken many forms over the years, but in the globalized period, technological advancement has enabled the evolution of communication methods, as well as the willingness to erase borders and merge the various dimensions that rule modern life. That is why social media is becoming increasingly important in today's world. Social media and social networks are easily considered to be the most critical factors in keeping up with the world today, whether to keep up with the news or to reach out to a larger audience for a variety of reasons. Since social media has increased the ability to access information as well as the opportunity to be a part of a community, social users are more interested in political engagement. In comparison to the populist perspective on the media, which focuses primarily on the negative reaction to the use of technology in the dissemination of the internet as a means of information, and the populist perspective on

nationalism and globalization, which focuses, instead, on how important globalization was in promoting xenophobia and cultural intolerance, the neoliberal use of social media, as well as the political interaction that results from it, appears to be widely appreciated and recognized worldwide, especially when it comes to minorities.

Chapter 1: An introduction to African American Slavery and Communication in Forbidden Times.

Chapter 1.1: Spotting Slavery in Africa

Colonialism is still a powerful symbol of some nations' dominance in many geographical areas around the world today. A significant diffusion of the practice of slavery can be traced back to the 16th century when the slave trade from Africa to the American continent began. Nevertheless, even before the Europeans arrived in Africa for the first time, slavery was still widespread in the area. The main purpose of the custom was the need to gain major work force at the cheapest cost, furthermore, an overwhelming majority of Africans had already begun to perceive slavery as a proper commercial institution other than a huge foundation of wealth. Nonetheless, while the concept of slavery may be considered savage in terms of the relationship between African landlords and their slaves, it is worth noting that African masters had no authority over their slaves' lives or deaths. If truth be told, slaves were given certain privileges in addition to their tasks since they were frequently seen as inferior members of the household due to the paternalistic structure of the asset. Slavery in Africa, on the other hand, was considerably different from slavery in the European and American lands: there, slaves faced a harsher institutionalization of the practice, according to which the unfortunates were not even perceived as human beings.
In the Western and Northern parts of Africa, as a matter of fact, war captives were first, commonly traded among landlords, and, as soon as the Europeans came along, entire families of slaves were sold and brought to Europe and then, once the continent was reached, they were exchanged for gold. Moreover, the further a slave was from its motherland, the higher their selling price became: this is due to the fact that, the greater was their distance from home, the more the new master was assured that they would face severe difficulties in attempting to flee or maybe even in forming any ties in such wildly divergent societies. (Horton, Horton 2006 p.21).

In the 15th century, as Portugal started to see the sea as a valuable resource for its expansion as a supremacy, the primary expression of Black slavery can be perceived into European markets: Madeira is a Portuguese island in the North Atlantic Ocean that is best known for being the site of the first well-known case of slavery, when Portuguese mariners and a large number of slaves disembarked to work on brown sugar plantations. As soon as colonists arrived on the African continent, they encountered a local king collecting slaves to sell in exchange for horses and primary resources. It wasn't long before they began organizing expeditions in the hopes of establishing a legitimate slave trading business: an international network was created. Shortly after, European imperial forces started to colonize the entire African continent, depleting the land and its inhabitants significantly.

This whole process gave rise to a slavery paradigm, which ensured the enrichment of European and American colonizers while also guaranteeing the unfortunate fate of African indigenous populations.

Chapter 1.2: The Journey of the Middle Passage

"Slavery is a dangerous business at sea as well as ashore." (Katz, W. 1974)

In 1503, the first known incidence of slaves entering the American continent was encountered: a ship load of slaves purchased in Lisbon by American settlers made its first route toward years of oppression.

The passage of slaves from Africa to America is one of the most heinous experiences a human being might ever experience: miserable individuals were squeezed in large numbers into tiny spaces ranging from 80cm to 120cm, in chains attached to a long series fixed to the lower deck, captives were bound to the ship and to each other for six to eight weeks -namely the Middle Passage-, until they reached on the new continent. According to statistics from the Atlantic slave trade, mortality rates were routinely around 15%, however throughout the Middle Passage, deaths could rise as high as one-third of the slaves.

However, beyond deaths caused by poor sanitary conditions and the spread of deathly diseases for which Africans did not have any antibodies, as they found themselves projected toward a future made of severe abuse and no rights, plenty of slaves preferred death rather than live through slavery. Several victims stopped eating completely, hoping to starve to

death, many others, on the other hand, took advantage of occasional openings of decks to dive out in open sea and drown. Nevertheless, as soon as those practices became more common among slaves, their keepers began to organize in order to prevent suicides on board: torture tools as hot coals in their mouths, or force-feeding devices as thumbscrews began to be used more and more, privileges, such as minimum physical exercise on deck were now prohibited. However, slaves tried unsuccessfully to strike back given the inhumane treatment on board, despite being depleted: numerous members of the crew died as a result of violent slave rebellions, which were frequently a disaster due to massive dysfunctionality among the rioters, who had to fight bare-handed against militarized ship crew members.

In 1730, slaves onboard the Little George ship succeeded in the seizure of the ship, executing numerous crew members, and convicting the captain in order to turn around and travel back to their homeland. Slaves began negotiating for their freedom as they arrived on the African continent, and unexpectedly, ninety-six slaves were allowed to go free. Nonetheless, this is a one-time occurrence. Following the riot, the number of slaves traded and hauled to America began to climb dramatically, indicating that Americans seemed to have no intention of stopping as the profit associated to the slave business compensated for the atrocities committed against the unfortunate victims.

Chapter 1.3: From Non-Verbal Communication

Slavery not only led in physical and psychological harm, but it also resulted in proper dehumanization practices.

Hair braiding motifs were traditionally utilized in many African countries to express age, culture, tribe, and ancestry, as well as to represent one's ethnic group and class status; during the Middle Passage, different African hairstyles were used to introduce food such as grains or seeds on board, in order not to starve to death. However, as slaves' conditions began to get extremely worse, captives could neither defend themselves from brutalities nor communicate with each other to riot, even though they outnumbered white colonists, being the greater minority in the American continent. Some women's heads even began to be shaved by colonizers in an attempt to strip them of their uniqueness and heritage, and, in this way, slave traders were ensured to erase women's ties to their homeland for good. The practice of shaving one's head was particularly ashaming for African slaves as, in the African culture, a shaved head indicated the status of an anonymous war prisoner other than a concrete extirpation of rights and humanity: indeed, enslaved African Americans were then subjected

to yet another form of cultural degradation, given the fact that hairdressing was a key practice in their ancestral heritages.

Once the American land was reached, however, slaves didn't have enough time to take care of themselves or engage in other leisure activities. On the plantations, captives toiled all week and slept in filthy dormitories with fleas and fungus as common scalp diseases which were transmitted even quicker due to the fact that they also struggled to obtain washing utensils, brushes, and African oils to take care of their hair. Notwithstanding, new regulations and policies were introduced in the early 1800s, providing that slaves were not required to serve on Sundays: it was a day dedicated to religious observances and leisure. It did not take long to captives to assign a part of the day to self-care so, eventually, slaves managed to introduce homemade haircare tools such as combs made of wool as well as several cutting tools to finally take care of their beloved hair. Women then began to remove their headbands, as well as the wool rollers that had been hiding their hair for the whole week, and men began to dye and moisturize their hair with grease and oils, since they were required to present themselves tidy and clean. Hair styling then slowly became one of the few disciplines in which whites permitted African Americans to express themselves reasonably freely before the American Civil War, when the bulk of the Black community was still oppressed.

Peculiarly, hairstyling and, braiding in particular, were not only self-care activities: braids were also employed for another vital purpose by black women, they were used as a clandestine communications system for slaves to interact with each other. Although they could read and write, slaves were often not privileged enough to get writing tools, or there was always a significant chance that perhaps the wrong information would fall into the hands of the plantation owners, which could have been fatal for them. Braids and cornrows were then employed as a guide to liberty through a complex duplication of roads and secret paths to escape from plantations: the variety of cornrows worn, for instance, could suggest how many routes to cross or even where to reach somebody who could assist them in escaping their enslavement, while curved cornrows copied exactly the shape of roads and passages to take. In addition, slaves would also put seeds in their hair with the intention to start their own crops once freedom was assured.

Slave masters, however, had no possibility of understanding the message transmitted among the captives thanks to cornrows as they simply could not imagine that a whole map might be buried in different haircuts.

Chapter 1.4: To Written Witnesses: The Case of Olaudah Equiano

In 1788, New Hampshire becomes the ninth state to ratify the US Constitution. The constitution includes a fugitive slave clause as well as the "three-fifths" article, which defines any slave as three-fifths of a white person for the purposes of congressional representation and taxation.

One year later, in 1789, a middle-aged African-born man in England released ''The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African'', providing the basis for the establishment of new literary genres and new approaches to the understanding of the experiences of enslaved Africans.

Olaudah Equiano was a slave who survived the Middle Passage and disembarked in the West Indies, like the great number of captives; in reality, only around a small percentage of slaves brought to the Americas disembarked in Colonial America directly. About the half of them, ended up arriving in Brazil, where European colonial slave masters used huge numbers of Angolan and Congolese slaves to produce sugarcane. Equiano was too little for the sugarcane farms, and no one wanted to buy him in Barbados, so eventually, he only stayed for a few months before being transported to the English colony of Virginia on the North American continent by traders. Nevertheless, slavery had been an institutionalized practice in Virginia for nearly two generations when Equiano arrived in the mid-eighteenth century.

Equiano appears to have been from a wealthy family, but at the age of eleven, he and his sister were still kidnapped and sold into slavery from their home in Essaka, an Ibo community in modern-day Nigeria. Equiano was transferred from one vendor to the next until he was purchased by Lieutenant Pascal, a Royal Navy commander, in 1754. Equiano traveled extensively with Pascal, learning the sailor's trade, before being sent to London to continue his education under the new name of Gustavus Vassa. However, his response to being detained by whites indicated his fears regarding their intentions, "Indeed, such were the horrors of my view and fears at the moment, that if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country," he observed, as he claimed that the whites acted in such cruel and brutal manners that he had never faced in his country. Indeed, the young boy was right: as soon as he was considered old enough for sugarcanes plantations, Pascal sold him once again to the West Indian trade, where he was eventually bought by a Quaker abolitionist -Robert King- from Philadelphia, a man who allowed Equiano to purchase its freedom back in 1766. As a free man, Equiano put into practice his sailor abilities and embarked toward

London, in which he eventually settled and started a family, even if the pivotal point in his life was the connections he established with sustainers of the Anti-Slavery Movement, which allowed him to present the intriguing narrative of his life as a slave and his fight for freedom, boosting antislavery feelings on both sides of the Atlantic by 1789.

The publication was a step forward in terms of spreading the message and even in generating a minimum revenue for Equiano. Literary historians and researchers credit Equiano's book with establishing the "slave narrative" genre and format, which other writers would use as a framework for their own writings in the future.

Equiano died in 1797, long before the British government took any action to abolish slavery. His Narrative, however, definitely encouraged the general public to reevaluate their perspective toward and devotion to slave trade. More than two centuries after it was originally written, Equiano's Narrative remains an important resource.

Olaudah Equiano's African name meant "lucky one," and he was unquestionably better off than the rest of slaves. Most captives longed for independence, and some sought to abolish slavery in any way they could, including via violence. Equiano, on the other hand, saw the importance of written language in the development of "new idioms of power" (Anderson, 1991), as well as its potential as a strong tool for information transmission.

Chapter 2: First Media Representation of African Americans

Chapter 2.1: The Rise of Visual Means of Communication

In 1900, the radio was created, allowing for the simultaneous transmission of news and entertainment to a huge number of people. The television was born not long after, as soon as innovators figured out how to mix audio and visuals. By 1955, television had quickly spread into the households of half of the United States' population. The widespread use of television began to grant a larger range of focus opportunities to a population that was growing less reliant on conventional values' appeal: people were now able to pick what they were really interested in, such as news, sports, TV shows and they could discuss about what they had seen on television altogether, creating a sense of shared experience. Sociocultural disparities were smoothed out as a result of the combined visual and auditory experience that television offered, so ethnic subgroups were co-opted by a more generic "American" mentality and rural areas were now more aware of different places thanks to television,

making immigration far more tempting. Politics as well was able to reach even people who were previously uninterested in both local and international affairs, thanks to the increasing usage of television in regard to political propaganda.

Among the first efforts to define the relationship between the media and popular opinion, lays the concept of the mass society. The above depicted the modern era as a multiplicity of diverse human beings who seemed to be very susceptible to large propaganda campaigns and, through its emphasis on the collapse of traditional societies and the growth of great metropolitan societies, the mass society theory has its roots in nineteenth-century sociology. The creation of the aforementioned "feeling of shared experience", which due to television's role had been gradually making its way into people's daily lives, was believed to have an instant impact on individuals' behavior at the time. Eventually, as a consequence, the study of direct media repercussions on individual attitudes was broadened to include topics such as media violence and the impact of election campaigns on voting trends. Researchers observed, however, that the link between mass communication, attitudes, and behavioral patterns is far more intricate than a simple stimulus-action process: as Klapper (1960) affirms, these mediating factors are such that they typically render mass communication a contributory agent, but not the sole cause, in a process of reinforcing the already existing conditions. Namely, the focus should have been on how messages broadcasted on television were perceived by individuals singularly in light of their perspectives and values. As a matter of facts, the media is considerably less focused on making a short statement about who to support or which brand to buy as an end in itself: media messages, in fact, also include sociopolitical expectations about what is and what is not acceptable in a community. This might encompass assumptions on how accessible hierarchical systems are, who has the right to free speech, who the key political actors are, and what constitutes "normal" behavior in the media. Television, the newspapers, and the radio, all broadcasted -and still do- information about specific occurrences that are implicitly connected to these underlying ideas on a daily basis.

A vivid illustration of media propaganda can be observed in the 1950s and 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement began gaining ground: it was at this stage that governments came to recognize the media's influence over the public, particularly of television, and decided to use it. However, the public was able to act as if they were interacting directly with political elites, producers, and institutions due to the speed and sensitivity of television broadcasting, making it difficult to resist the dramatic demand for and the popularity of the Civil Rights movement. The discovery of such atrocities would have far-reaching ramifications in terms of increasing political engagement and, as a result, profoundly changing society. By airing debates and

interrogating politicians on the matter, news networks in the South of the United States began educating the Black community and encouraging them to speak up for what was right.

In addition, any discussion about media and civil rights must also address television. At the time, several white Americans believed that the Black persona in popular media represented African Americans, increasing ethnic tensions, because it was typically characterized by racist prejudices with ancient foundations and, because African Americans were unable to write or produce due to segregation in the media industry, they had no influence or control over the images.

Chapter 2.2: Martin Luther King's Black Crusade for Fairness: The Civil Rights Movement

The mass media's influence on the Civil Rights Movement was built on their coverage of protests and repression. By presenting defenseless protestors being attacked by police or other government officials, the media could not portray barbarity in a biased manner and, from the beginning of the lunch counter sit-ins to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, media coverage was at its peak. At the time, the media was an important ally of civil rights campaigners and marchers, even if the American media's and ideology's portrayals of Africa and Africans at the time were significant in molding not just whites' preconceptions and ideas of the Black community, but also African Americans' beliefs of their origins: in fact, African Americans who were subjected to slavery and mistreated by the American society, still thought they were superior to unenlightened and barbaric Africans who did not follow in their footsteps and, therefore, African Americans began to assume that they were actually favored by the fact of just being exposed to the American culture.

The Black condemnation of Martin Luther King Jr. in concern of the media portrait of African Americans was sharp: southern white conservatives in the United States claimed that in the 19th century, national television news coverage incited African American uprisings and damaged racial "harmony." Anyone who had seen the national news knew how hard it would be to reject the facts, especially regarding prejudice and persecution of the Black community on one among the most significant incidents, namely, the live airing of "Bloody Sunday." On March 7th, 1965, six-hundreds civil and human rights activists marched peacefully across the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama as part of the voting rights struggle. Governor George Wallace ordered as a response, that federal agents were to use whatever procedures

were necessary to prevent the march from proceeding (Roberts and Klibanoff 384). Hundreds of Alabama security officials, allegedly as many as the marchers, stood on the ground and on that dreadful day, all six-hundreds of these men, women, and children were viciously beaten with clubs and sprayed with tear gas live on television.

Yet too many Americans, particularly white people, tend to picture Martin Luther King as he behaved in 1965 during the Selma happenings: a simple black activist who solely dealt with racial issues, rather than a deep critical intellectual who foresaw the long-term implications of wealth disparity and the uncontrolled use of state-sanctioned abuses with remarkable accuracy. There was much more: as a civil rights activist, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the few figures to have employed peaceful methods to achieve fairness and abolish segregation in the South of the United States. He was a well-known public speaker who led demonstrations, sit-ins, and large-scale protests, the majority of those being of a non-violent nature -even though protestors were eventually often repressed with violence-. He gave strength to a community and future generations as a result of his commitment to continue fighting for civil rights.

Also, Dr. King clearly recognized the importance of the media in influencing public opinion; he was well conscious that white Americans seldom listened to Black people's positions, therefore Dr. King focused on the visual transmission of knowledge through television and consequently, the white population was compelled to visually acknowledge and not dismiss the horrific conditions that African Americans were in. However, it is important to state that it was not even television as a whole that embraced King's principles, but rather a certain group of reporters and producers at a given time, each with their own perspective on what constituted adequate fairness for African Americans. The national proper statement on Civil Rights was that if Black people's misery was dramatic enough, it made for good television, the same good television which was achieved by keeping the public attention through a violent and degrading segregationists' perspective in order to maximize the networks' profits. The commonly held belief was that white people would decide whether or not oppressed Black people should be given some power: the simple demand for visibility was not acceptable at all.

Nevertheless, King's commitment to peace as a core human ideal propelled him to the alarming assumption that such a strategic society was suffering from a serious, invisible disease that could not be cured without a massive shift in common thinking. He recognized the importance of encouraging white liberals to join the movement because it would help generate more media coverage, and he was prepared to do so thanks to its persuasive rhetoric, which also allowed him to be seen as a moderating presence among both the Black and the white community; as a consequence, the latter gradually began to return to him the same

integrity and honesty with which he had surrounded its figure. King was beginning to be praised for building a movement without upsetting too much the status quo. Notwithstanding, after the passing of Civil Rights legislation in 1964 and 1965, King began to question the country's fundamental goals, telling American governments that they had little ethical authority to persuade black people to stop massacring each other, and those Civil Rights laws were meaningless without an economic and human rights perspective. After realizing that the preponderance of Americans living in poverty were not white, King developed a class viewpoint. He denounced the rising income discrepancies between wealthy and poor families and called for major structural changes in society to balance power and money in a better way. It was not long after these statements were made that Martin Luther King was beginning to be seen as veering off by threatening a still well-grounded white-centric society and, eventually, King's aspirations to mobilize the underprivileged were ended prematurely by an assassin's bullet. Although he ended up feeling betrayed by his country, King fought for it because he recognized its importance to humanity's future. He passed away longing for a transformation.

Chapter 2.3: Being a Political Leader Under the Eyes of The World: Malcolm X

"The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses." (X, 1965)

Politicians' considerable exposure on television is certainly a potential for them to build agreement. This increased visibility, nevertheless, is a two-edged weapon: the media not only displays the exceptional politician's persona, but also his flaws. Leaders should utilize communication channels with utmost care, lest they achieve the opposite of what they intended to.

Malcolm X and his ideals represented a severe threat to a white-centric society and its rhetoric was perceived as too harsh in regard to white America, due to the perception of blunt criticism toward a non-inclusive society. His response to the media representation of African

Americans was fairly extreme, as he pointed out to the fact that the media -which according to X were produced by and for white Americans-, portrayed an altered reality which represented a further colonization through the so-called ''media bias'', namely the inability and/or unwillingness of media to report an event in a neutral manner, free from governmental, societal and economic influences. The depiction of Africa and Africans in the American media not only harmed African Americans' self-esteem, but it also reinforced a sense of being oppressed, colonized, and enslaved. The media's employment of images of modern colonialism and white epistemology to propagate racism was current colonialism in action. While addressing and campaigning against such injustices, Malcolm X employs black teachings to empower black people across the world about their blackness. Recognizing blackness clashes with white centricity, earning the extreme label yet again.

Still, Malcolm X message seemed quite too tangled: whenever a culture is thoroughly rooted in a monolithic conception of race, one fixed ethnic group becomes the community's center. Malcolm X's viewpoint was not an endorsement of an unjustified brutalization of the whites, but rather a moral imperative. White philosophy is tightly related to American culture, as Miller (2004, pp. 200-201) points out, making the country a white-centric community through the delineation of media designs which aim at the enhancement of white victimhood. Malcolm X, on the contrary, campaigned for a countermovement in the United States against a white culture's sole point of view, calling for a response that was beyond the dominant culture's imagination, which eventually culminated into his public homicide before the eyes of America.

Chapter 3: Belonging to a Minority in The Internet Era: Black Lives Matter

Chapter 3.1: The Rise of Social Media and Political Participation

Mass networking and social media are frequently considered to be the most significant factors in keeping up with the world today, whether to follow with the news or even to reach out to a wide audience for a number of different purposes. From 1997 until 2020, the evolution of social media can be divided into six distinct periods. The Auroral Phase, which might be regarded to as the beginning of an era, emphasizes the actual creation of networks, and connects to the Transition Phase, which began in 2002. From 2003 to 2006, there were a couple of "waves of expansion" that initiated internet technologies as professional exchange platforms that captivated users by providing the ability to post and share unique material: eventually, this entire mechanism reached its apex, from 2010 to 2017, with the fifth phase,

namely, the one of Consolidation and Co-evolution, in which the most popular social media platforms, such as Instagram, were posed under the spotlight.

Furthermore, major episodes involving the spread of fake news, the use of bots, and stolen data finally ushered in the last phase in 2018. Social media, on the other hand, are still widely used and have a significant impact on people's daily lives.

Social media represent a great opportunity for traditionally marginalized minorities as, especially in regard to young people, they are employed as the major mean through which it is possible for them to learn and spread information about their lifestyles, customs, and, unfortunately, injustices that may be experienced periodically. With the digitalization of the media, and the essential tool they are today, political participation is becoming accessible to anyone, and learners are motivated to make the best out of it. Huge platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter, which count billions of users, are constantly used for the purpose of establishing ingroup-identification ties among people who share the same views or the same backgrounds, motivating them to stand for the image of their belonging-group. Ingroup identification is confidently among the major strengths when it comes to political participation: it can provide individuals with the basis for socializing, sharing common points of view, and, in this manner, it may also enhance their sense of belonging. Therefore, the more a subject is involved and passionate about a certain group, the more it will serve it for its cause.

Political behavioral patterns are influenced by participants' beliefs about their group's ability to achieve fixed goals: when people share more political materials on Facebook or other platforms, they boost their collective confidence, which leads to an overall increase of political engagement. Individuals may be more likely to participate in such activities if they believe their group can work together to achieve such targets, despite the fact that high levels of identification may inhibit the free exchange of ideas concerning major topics within the group. On the other hand, low confidence in group cohesion may reduce the impact of collective identity on expressive behavior. Someone who perceives their group as fully skilled, however, will regard at their own expressive conduct on social media to be even more valuable to the group, amplifying the influence of group identification.

According to statistics, minorities of young people, especially African Americans, are the largest news consumers on the internet. It is important to note, once again, that their use of social media is not limited to gathering news; on the contrary, young people from minorities and marginalized backgrounds are more likely to increase their political engagement through advocacy and the dissemination of cultural and social information. Instead of setting aside time to participate in domestic and international discussions about ethnicity and violence, younger generations are, today, indeed able to incorporate political and social engagement

into their daily routines due to the improvement of Internet service and the ability to interpret and contribute to social media debates via smartphone; hence, due to the possibility to reach out to a huge audience, social media provide the perfect mean for activists to show their ingroup identification and social identity when it comes to showing opposition to prejudice and injustice.

Chapter 3.2: The Birth of #BlackLivesMatter

The hashtag ''#BlackLivesMatter'' came to the attention of the whole world in the summer of 2013, after George Zimmerman's acquittal in the shooting death of one of the numerous African American young mans, named Trayvon Martin. On February 26, 2012, Martin went for a walk through a neighborhood in Sanford, Florida, wearing a hooded sweater and holding a sugary drink and some sweets in his hands. Despite the fact that Martin had done nothing illegal, George Zimmerman, a community watch volunteer, deemed Martin suspect and contacted the authorities. Notwithstanding the 911 operator's warning to step back and maintain his distance, Zimmerman started a fight which, Zimmerman fatally shooting Martin, who was only seventeen years old at the time. Martin's persona quickly became the center of speculation and debate, despite his young age, weight and size disadvantage, and the crucial fact that he was unarmed; he was just a young black man wearing a hoodie, walking in someone else's neighborhood.

When Zimmerman was found not criminally responsible for all charges related to Martin's murder in the summer of 2013, some in America appeared to be shocked. Thereby, it was the killing of a young Black man and the failure of the US judiciary system to account for his tragic death that inspired three women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, to confront the United States with three straightforward and imperative words: Black Lives Matter. The death of Trayvon Martin sparked Black Lives Matter's mission of empowering local communities and providing support to them after they have been exposed to state-sanctioned or vigilante-sanctioned abusive behaviors: Black Lives Matter is in fact committed to ending systemic racism and improving the power to intervene in police killings of Black people in the United States, Canada, and the UK. Since the Movement's beginnings, there have been innumerable high-profile and low-profile homicides of Black people by police officers across the States, and still, the Movement has remained committed to ending such

atrocities. The African American community in America is in public uproar and particularly in the United States, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has become a battle cry for intervention. As exampled by Garza's and others' behavior, the civil rights struggle of the twenty-first century is representative of the people in its goals and skilled in its input as it is fomented by anger and disappointment, moral indignation at oppression and systemic racism, and dissatisfaction with the country's widespread cruelty toward those it considers undeserving. Furthermore, despite the fact that Cullors, Tometi, and Garza were instrumental in coining the hashtag that has come to define the current generation, the movement cannot be defined by a single central authority or a small group of leaders because it refuses to accept conventional hierarchical leadership frameworks. Rather, #BlackLivesMatter is an overarching goal that supports, empowers, and advises countless local sections of the movement's ongoing improvement initiatives. One of the main examples of the Black community's political engagement is surely portrayed by Shaun King, an American writer and activist strongly tied to the Black Lives Matter Movement. More participants are nowadays learning about the true empowerment and equality movements in regard to traditionally oppressed communities and when it comes to the Black Lives Matter campaign, acknowledgment focusing on human rights is doubtlessly a required mean of understanding. Racism has been taking different shapes over time and so has been doing the means used to contrast micro and macro aggressions. Shaun King who is involved in the first line and appears as completely devoted to the Black Lives Matter movements, has gathered together millions of people worldwide, regardless of their backgrounds and their lifestyles, and somehow managed to raise awareness about Black communities' conditions in the US and how police brutality affected them directly. It is worth to point out again that all of that was possible thanks to social networks such as Instagram and Twitter, as well as the advantage brought by the Coronavirus pandemic and quarantine, which made it impossible to ignore the diffusion of unfiltered media content outlining exploitation, brutality, and deprivation of basic human rights at the expense of ethnic minorities.

Since many of the younger generation of activist groups are energized, brilliant, and highly technologically skilled, their initiatives all seem to be frenetic and innovative, and like a tsunami wave, they have managed to introduce in people daily lives information about killings that have often been regarded to as a long-term problem affecting local communities and were largely ignored by the general public, notwithstanding the fact that the emergence of a new generation of digital campaigners like Garza and others in the United States has prompted a sense of urgency and started building consensus as well.

Officer-involved shootings have now become front-page news, and they can no longer be covered up or even denied.

Chapter 3.3: ''I Can't Breathe''

The Black Lives Matter Movement eventually became a global movement in 2020 after the brutal murder of George Floyd happened in worldwide vision. The latter shocked people all over the world and support was shown to Floyd's family, friends, and the Black community as a whole. On May 25th, 2020, Minneapolis police arrested George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, when a grocery store employee called 911 around 8pm, and claimed that Mr. Floyd had purchased cigarettes with a counterfeit $20 banknote. According to the authorities, Mr. Floyd appeared to be under the influence in an initial statement, which reported as well that authorities instructed him to step aside from his vehicle, and that he objected as he got out. Officers, furthermore, said to have noticed that he seemed to be in physical difficulty, and requested an ambulance. The police report however was missing valuable information regarding the horrific event, which were filled in by spectator video and policeman body video evidence: the surveillance video from the body-worn camera shows police officers approaching a car with Mr. Floyd in the driver's seat. Mr. Lane, one of the cops, shines his flashlight on the windshield and orders Mr. Floyd to raise his hands throughout the clip. After being asked several times, Mr. Floyd eventually unlocks the driver's door and apologizes but, six seconds after the door was opened, Mr. Lane grabbed his gun, pointed it at Mr. Floyd, and dragged him out of the car, handcuffed him and transferred him to their patrol vehicle without explaining the aim of the inspection. As shown by video evidence, the moment in which Mr. Floyd seemed to have lost his mind was when he was forced into the backseat of the police car, which he refused to due to his claustrophobia, and was subsequently aggressively pushed on the ground by three officers, being Derek Chauvin the one to put his knees on Mr. Floyd's body while keeping his wrists still. Mr. Floyd soon began to moan that he couldn't breathe; still, regardless of Mr. Floyd's panic, for nine and a half minutes, Mr. Chauvin maintained his knees on Mr. Floyd's neck.

Kueng, another officer, checked for Mr. Floyd's heartbeat six minutes after the policemen placed him face down on the ground, and only after passersby began to yell at them to pay attention to him. He said he could not feel it, nevertheless, Mr. Floyd is still being held in a position that hinders his respiration by all three officers for the next two minutes, until rescue teams arrive and transfer him into an ambulance.

That same night, he was confirmed dead at the scene.

George Floyd's tragic murder marked a pivotal point in African Americans' history. Although George Floyd was not the sole victim of racism to die at the assault of US police forces,

images of him slowly suffocating gained an unexpected response and quickly escalated into what may be considered as the largest Movement in US history which saw millions of people taking the protests to the streets all around the world, and the internet eruption in support of African American equality in the United States. Due to the general pandemic, since the humanity had been in stop and was put at an extremely high risk, 2020 could have been the time to participate in a sort of civil resistance that could have challenged the systemic police violence that occurred with George Floyd's death. In addition, Floyd's killing could not be fully understood without mentioning interest in the display of Black death which have been characterizing the US since its foundation. While the nine-minute video of his death was just too horrific for others, it gave the opportunity to right wing extremists to mock rioters by downplaying the circumstances.

However, when it comes to online participation, it may now be broadened to include major offline effort as well: this may be especially true for younger people, who are disproportionately targeted in online political debates. Furthermore, this might make it much easier and more profitable for #BlackLivesMatter, which began as a social media debate and has now made its way into the political sphere in the interests of actual governmental change and long-overdue compensation for Black Americans.

Chapter 3.4: How Black HipHop Culture Stands in Activism: Tupac Shakur

Anti-police attitude in music is not unique to the Black American life experience: throughout the 1950s and 1960s, jazz musicians contributed to the spread of the civil rights pillars through songs that made explicit allusions to discriminatory practices and police misconduct. On his 1971 album, "What's Going On," Marvin Gaye addressed racial violence, and on the title track, he begs, "don't punish me with brutality". As riots against harsh police procedures erupted in places such as Watts, Detroit, and Newark between 1965 and 1967, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas' "Dancing in the Street" became background music for urban opposition. It can then be seen how music played a crucial role in African Americans' lives when it came to political representation and human rights earning.
Whereas widespread poverty and extreme violence wracked Black neighborhoods in the early 1970s, when hip-hop was born in the Bronx, New York, deliberations about racial issues in

America were deemed socially unacceptable, and the Black perception was socially excluded and inhibited in the media, hip-hop performers were monitored, aimed, and denigrated for spreading awareness on those institutionalized inequalities that troubled Black America. Hip-hop artists, ranging from myths and icons to underground pioneers, have knitted a complex, distinctively American form of artistic expression that not only chronicles inequalities and discrimination in America, but also the movements and leaders that stood up in the face of abuse. Hip-hop alludes to the creative, ethical, philosophical, and political views and goals established and embraced by its supporters, who typically regard hip-hop as an ideology or point of view. As hip-hop's influence has increased, so have its rebellious and self-defining viewpoints, which challenge conventional notions of identity and nationhood. International hip-hop, consequently, has emerged as a subculture that encourages and includes artistic endeavors, knowledge construction, group identity, and political engagement, transcending and questioning conventional concepts of identity, ethnicity, and nationality. One of the most prominent figures belonging to the Hip-Hop culture is doubtlessly Tupac Shakur.

Tupac's short story might be interpreted as a metaphor for the majority of African American adolescents. Tupac Shakur is a valuable political figure, preaching freedom and racial social action: whether viewed as a martyr or a criminal, he was one of hip-most hop's powerful and passionate speakers for social equality and radical revolution. Tupac Shakur was born in 1971, at the beginning of the post-civil rights period, and quickly became a symbol of hip-hop and the complex dynamics that shaped it. During his lifetime, he witnessed the drug crisis, the resurgence of black power, and the acceptance of hip-hop, all elements which profoundly influenced his existence as well as his music. In addition, the escalating violence and turmoil perceived at the time, fueled a new sense of black sociopolitical concern, with many turning to black liberation themes. In hundreds of tunes, black youths began to push hip-hop into a counter cultural domain of musicality, denouncing the drug business, white nationalism, and police brutality. Tupac embraced the movement, and his first album, "2Pacalypse Now" (1991), addressed themes such as systemic racism, brutality, illegal substances, police abuse, and xenophobia.

Tupac also aimed to encourage engagement among inner-city teenagers by developing a philosophy that was relevant to their situation and may spark their interest in political participation. The final product of this project development was labeled as "Thug Ideology''. Shakur identified as a thug since that is how people referred to him and his friends; moreover, his background in a dysfunctional family with a substance addict parent and no financial support from the rest of his family shaped his thug approach to life: Tupac sought refuge in the streets as a kid where he had a network of hustlers, pimps, and drug lords. Consequently,

in the song ''The Streetz R Deathrow'' he shared with his audience particulars about his difficult childhood and eventually explained to the public that ''Thug Life'' is what the majority of Black communities' children end up living due to their constant exposure to racial hate and mistreatment. Tupac, yet, claimed that by engaging in politics, the "thugs" could possibly obtain political leverage. They were just a group of potential revolutionaries who could battle for their community but could also undermine their racial identity if not properly handled, so, for these reasons Tupac contributed to the formation of an ideology for people living the Thug Life, which had been designed as a proper medium of instruction, particularly for children.

Throughout the 9 years during which he entertained crowds, Tupac Shakur conveyed the ambitions, aims, concerns, grief, fears, and reality of youngsters in underprivileged communities, and his respected position was expressed in the recognition of his art in death and life. Tupac Shakur was popular in the entertainment industry and among inner-city kids not just for his lyrical topics or creative skills, but also -and mostly- for being a political activist, teacher, and source of inspiration for his community. His greatest aim was to continue teaching and motivating his people to become revolutionaries in their own defense, through political and social activities, as well as through technological advances.

Finally, intellectual debate about hip-hop multiculturalism is a major aspect; thus, regardless of artistic talent, millions around the world are creating what political theorist Antonio Gramsci tends to refer to as "organic intellectuals": individuals are using hip-hop to develop critical arguments and interpretive skills that can be applied to a variety of sociopolitical contexts.

Chapter 4: Backlash and Populism

Chapter 4.1: Social Media and The Populist Response

Because of the magnitude, range, and openness of social media platforms, individuals can interact and join mass movements outside of traditional political systems more quickly and easily than ever before, and sometimes even for free. Emerging social movements, such as Black Lives Matter, have developed, primarily utilizing social media in their activities, opposing existing parties and policies in ways that were unthinkable just a few years ago. Nonetheless, these significant shifts in communication are increasingly assisting populist movements of both liberals and conservatives in gaining significant amounts of support and

notoriety, particularly when combined with significant reductions in people's trust and confidence in traditional political institutions.

In recent years, the focus has mostly been on groups who are inherently right-wing, as seen by intense opposition against immigrants and refugees, diversity, and the priority to preserve cultural identity, generally in opposition to globalization processes and melting pots societies; nonetheless, the global recession appears to have fostered the growth of what is commonly known as the populist left, which fights for people's and workers' interests while opposing modern capitalism and criticizing spending cuts and austerity tactics. Although presenting separate and distinct responses to social issues, each category of parties is representative of the same broader tendency, which can be generically labeled as "populist."

Throughout the ideological range, populist parties place the honest, average citizen against the progressive, conventional party system. Populist movements across political landscape are now increasing in membership and influence because they are unified in overall discontent with the mechanisms of democratic politics and, in several aspects, social media is the best choice for populist parties as it is decentralized, and participatory. It is also not dominated by the ruling elite: the information is supplied by average people and everyone cane share its opinion freely.

The advent of social media and the boost in technological development has surely brought advantages to many but has indeed left a great number of historically active political and social participants behind: populist leaders, belonging to both right-wing populism and left-wing populism, started taking advantage of the situation, which eventually resulted into a principle of de-globalization aimed at undermining not only technological signs of progress but also to prevent the formation of a direct expression of political contestation groups which could incite people to develop a critical approach in respect to governmental choices. Nonetheless, on-the-ground action -on which populist tend to found their political attitude- is also a required element in approaching social mobilization: it is true that social media create ties and facilitate the establishment of gatherings among individuals, thus it is also true that political participation is based as well on concrete action and in the end, electronic means and social network-based organization could not be enough to achieve an actual change. Besides, another issue could be faced for what concerns the aspect of group polarization: in fact, a strong ingroup identification could lead to group vulnerability due to the self-exclusion of minorities from the political scene.

Chapter 4.2: The Triad: Black Lives Matter, All Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter

As soon as the Black Lives Matter hashtag first attracted the attention of social media users, it was confronted with a considerable amount of backlash: along with several other important manner in which people rejected the #BlackLivesMatter movement on social media, among the most important there was the launch of the hashtag #AllLivesMatter as a counter-slogan to disrupt the purpose and understanding of the #BlackLivesMatter moral imperative.

Several people on social media used the hashtag #AllLivesMatter to refer to a larger generality of audiences, in order to mask the explicit and severe brutality targeted at Black Americans. As a result, the organization's ultimate aim was delegitimized and deracialized. The debate concentrated on a "colorblind" campaign strategy, condemning Black Lives Matter demonstrators of just being restrictive and prioritizing Black lives over every other existence. This subgroup of people on social media made very clear xenophobic statements at times, including suggesting that African Americans are rude, inconsiderate, and threatening, despite hiding their opposition to #BlackLivesMatter through the use of a well-studied rhetoric. Whereas the purpose of the slogan All Lives Matter might be the one to place people's existence on equal terms and promote a sense of solidarity, replying to Black Lives Matter is more controversial than empowering: this might be because the assertion ''all'' in concern to ethnicities, totally ignores systemic racism and denies the disproportionate impact of hate and oppression that Black people endure on a daily basis. As a result, the All Lives Matter movement adopts, resettles, and modifies Black present realities and perceptions, as well as the movement's name. However, in attempt to comprehend these adverse attitudes, it is necessary to consider the psychology of "white fragility" (DiAngelo 2017), as well as the predisposition of white nationalism and privilege. The All Lives Matter movement is, in essence, a traditional "fragile" reaction to racial tension and instability: fragility, according to DiAngelo, is indeed a lack of performance related with unexplored, persistent preconceptions and prejudices concerning ethnicity.

The most prominent "life" topic in the All Lives Matter theme communities revolves around police lives: it is quite obvious that #policelivesmatter and #bluelivesmatter are prioritized as issues in All Lives Matter over Black Lives Matter; in contrast, hashtags indicating strong anti-police sentiments, such as #killercops, are nearly solely associated with #BlackLivesMatter. Therefore, it can be asserted that All Lives Matter's association with police deaths aligns perfectly with a broader engagement to the conservative and populist sphere of social media. Even farther opposition to Black Lives Matter movements has been largely based on the Blue Lives Matter movement as Blue Lives Matter's ultimate purpose is

primarily to provide a message from the police forces' perspective, since their primary assumption is that there is a war of aggression on police authorities, implying that Black Lives Matter is primarily an anti-police popular uprising. Blue Lives Matter, as a mass movement, displays resistance to the racial challenges brought by both overall demographic changes and by major new governmental opposition; merely because individuals of color have more influence today to have their voices addressed, it could represent a racial challenge to numerous whites: consequently, the Blue Lives Matter campaign explicitly criticize Black Lives Matter for pushing people to assault police officers. Nonetheless, the government's response to the Blue Lives Matter protests has primarily focused on raising prison sentences for people charged with felonies involving police officers. According to progressive critics, such rules are unnecessary because violent attacks on officials are already condemned to harsh punishments, and there are no hate-crime criteria for determining such intent, furthermore, policemen do not embody such criteria for hate-crime legislation, which is intended to protect oppressed minority populations who have endured institutionalized oppression. Eventually, a doubt on whether such laws may be introduced to safeguard policemen which engage into power abuse towards innocent people may arise.

Still, these counter-movements seem to miss once again the aim of the Black Lives Matter movement and stating that ''All Lives Matter'' or that ''Blue Lives Matter'' too, only contributes to reinforce the concept that the Black community is actually impacted by discriminations and abuses that white people do not experience solely due to the color of their skin.

Conclusions:

Despite shared perception to the contrary, Black communities' progression in the last half-century seems to have been remarkable. Nevertheless, the country has a long way to go for the achievement of actual racial integration: slavery was one of America's most heinous crimes, and it was not repaired either by the U.S. Constitution or the Civil War. It just shifted its horrific shape and proceeded to oppress a whole chunk of American society, generation after generation. Still, thanks to Dr. King's dream, the Civil Rights Movement delivered a powerful strike against discrimination in America. But Americans are still a long way from realizing that ideal. Even after America elected its first Black President, Barack Obama, structural racism remained deeply entrenched, especially in its institutions, a factor which provides to African Americans the feeling of being constantly stuck in their status.

Acknowledging ethnicity and racial prejudice in America entails confronting a number of paradoxes. Although racial biases have shifted, Black and white Americans seem to be as split as they were during the era of segregation at several levels, such as the economic one. The concept of the ''American Dream'' was based on the principle of a multicultural democracy, in which sociocultural backgrounds did not appear to be as important as in other countries, America's duty was to boost this multiethnic society without engaging into ethnic groups' clashes. In a mixed society, however, emphasizing ethnicity may result to a zero-sum struggle for public goods. Racism, as stated by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), is not a break from the non-racist standard; rather, discrimination is the daily routine for Black communities in the United States, and by implication, in so many other societies. It is strongly ingrained in social institutions, and as a result, formal ideals of equal treatment push Blacks toward micro and macro discriminatory practices with no recourse. Likewise, both the white working class and the white elite benefit tremendously from institutionalized racism; as a result, much of the working class has no desire to change the situation. This makes the transition to equality even more difficult.

Today, something that originated as a mere hashtag has managed to grow to represent an entire era. In only a few years, the Black Lives Matter movement has blossomed into a broad network which has now revolutionized the approach of the public to racial issues. Ever since establishment, with the purpose to abolish racial prejudice and strengthening community power to make changes in treatment of Black communities, Black Lives Matter has taken on numerous faces, uniting millions, and millions of people in pursuit of its goal. It is noteworthy how the Black Lives Matter has become a catch-all for anti-racist initiatives that operate separately from the group: nonetheless, the hashtag's sociocultural influence is widely perceived, especially on Social Media. Civic activism and social expression are unquestionably influenced by people's conduct, which is dependent on the expectation that their community may hopefully be able to accomplish substantial changes and be acknowledged on the political scene. This is certainly relevant for ethnic minority groups, since neo-liberal online political participation is much more advantageous to them than conventional aspects of political mobilization in terms of both ingroup identification and eagerness to educate and inform their audience about social injustice and collective aspects of their lives; this happens to be particularly true when group stereotyping is witnessed first-hand. By enhancing the formation of solid connections based on common assumptions and fueled by a well-built devotion, oppressed minorities are today capable of tearing down political barriers to obtain access into the political landscape, which was previously reserved to an exclusively white and well-educated power elite.

As a conclusion, technology and technological improvements must not be viewed solely as a path to an endpoint; rather, both must engage in a journey of societal transition and evolution toward a fairer, more inclusive society.

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Abstract:

26 maggio 2020, Minneapolis. Davanti al terzo distretto del dipartimento di Polizia della città si raduna un folto gruppo di manifestanti, dopo aver marciato pacificamente. È l'inizio delle proteste razziali negli Stati Uniti del 2020. L'evento scatenate delle stesse si ritrova nella morte di George Floyd, avvenuta il 25 maggio 2020, dopo che un ufficiale del dipartimento di Polizia di

Minneapolis si è inginocchiato sul collo della vittima per 9 minuti e 46 secondi. Il tutto trasmesso tramite una diretta social e poi diffuso via internet nei giorni a seguire. Ma dove affonda le radici la discriminazione razziale afroamericana? E quanto e in che modo i social media hanno contribuito alla promozione dei movimenti attivisti, come il Civil Rights Movement e il #BlackLivesMatter? Attraverso una breve revisione della storia della comunità afroamericana, partendo dalla schiavitù con la sua comunicazione non verbale, passando per Martin Luther King e Malcom X con il loro impatto televisivo e fino ai giorni contemporanei, nell'era di Internet, questo lavoro di tesi ha come obiettivo quello di dimostrare come i mezzi di comunicazione nelle varie epoche vadano a potenziare la voce delle minoranze, specialmente la tanto discussa comunità afroamericana. Grazie ai social media, come Instagram e Twitter, la protesta afroamericana contro le discriminazioni e le violenze ha raggiunto il suo apice, sensibilizzando milioni di persone senza distinzione di etnia ed estrazione sociale. La risposta al movimento #BlackLivesMatter è da ricercarsi nel lancio dell'hashtag #AllLivesMatter, che ha aperto un dibattito di natura sociale e politica in tutto il mondo, in particolare fra i più giovani rendendo evidente il ruolo dei social media nell'attivismo contemporaneo. In conclusione, un semplice hashtag ha rivoluzionato l'approccio ad un problema sociale di enorme portata come il razzismo e si è rivelato non solo un mezzo di sensibilizzazione estremamente efficace ma anche un'arma per le minoranze che da secoli combattono perché la loro voce venga ascoltata.