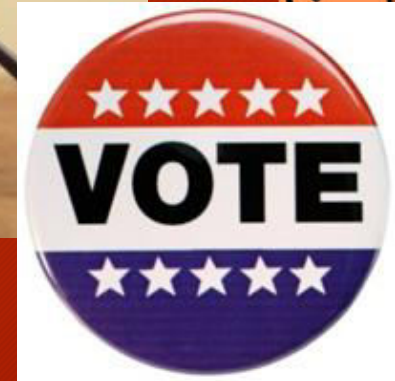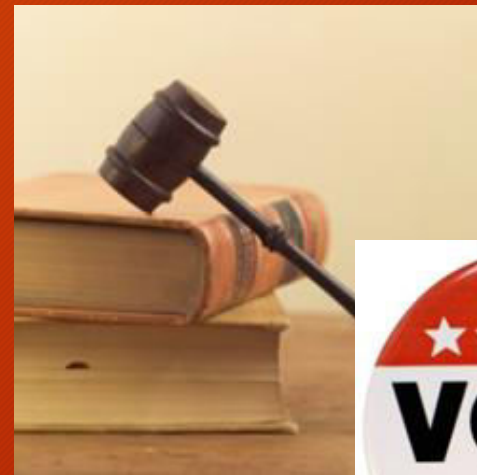# Importance of Civic Engagement

Student Name

Institution

Date

Introduction

- Participation in civic process has been noted as a vital aspect of Americans as it reflects application of fundamental rights and responsibilities bestowed on the people (Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

- Through civic participation, people are able to define their legislative, participative, and administrative structures through their choices, identities, and demographic characteristics (White, Van Scotter, Hartoonian, & Davis, 2007).

Introduction (cont.)

- Historically, civic engagement has been defined through perceptions and ideologies meant to influence actions of government by invoking changes according to mass interests (Ekman, 2012)

- Due to the importance of civic participation, methodologies that enhance connection, communication, and knowledge propagation are preferable so that likeminded people can form influential groups that encourage other demographic segments that have chosen to remain silent as it pertains to political processes (Achenbaum, 2006).

Importance

- Civic engagement has been part of American democracy where collective and individual actions have been used to identify and address matters of public concern as shown in historical events (Achenbaum, 2006).

- The belief that participation will evoke change often determines whether or not an individual or group of individuals will actively participate in the political process (Achenbaum,2006)

Historical perspective

- Principles of civil participation are founded on the philosophy of Theodore Roosevelt who claimed that equality could not be achieved without civic engagement (Achenbaum, 2006).

- If all individuals do not have the same capabilities to be heard and to feel that their views will influence the government, then only those who participate will benefit from the political process (Achenbaum, 2006).

Political activism

- This concept has been developed using the principles of formation of voluntary organizations, mobilization of political activism, and advancement of adult education (Achenbaum, 2006).

- This has been the method of eliciting changes such as equality of pay, the right to vote, civil rights, and other areas of legislature that have been based in emotional connection between the proposed change and those involved in the activism (Achenbaum, 2006).

- Young adults are often active during college if they are not required to also work full time and the elderly have historically been more involved following retirement (Achenbaum, 2006).

- Minorities and those in a lower socioeconomic status have been less apt to participate due to both work requirements and the belief that their participation will not be as well developed to elicit change (Achenbaum, 2006).

Political activism (cont.)

- Despite essence of these foundations, their negative outcome has been divisive among people willing and not ready to take part in political processes actively (Achenbaum, 2006).

- Considering these concepts, historical civic engagement has been restricted to the elite young and older citizens with the majority of these being white Americans (Achenbaum, 2006).

- Adults, young people in colleges, and elites have historically been more active while marginalized citizens, and those in low socioeconomic status are not bothered (Achenbaum, 2006).

- Currently, civic engagement is weak due to decline in activities that boosted citizen understanding of public issues such as newspaper readership. Further, issues affecting domestic processes are now globalized with an unintended consequence of reduced public participation in vital socio-political processes (Achenbaum, 2006).
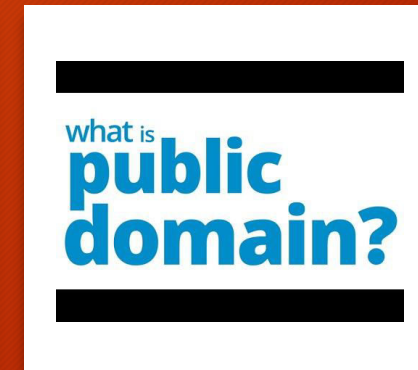
Opportunities for engagement

- Education is the first solution to creating opportunities where people are given information about importance of their contribution through civic engagement in every political process (Ekman & Amna, 2012).

- The development of the internet has increased the ability to participate in volunteer organizations by minimizing the amount of time that is necessitated by these organizations.

- Modern communication platforms like internet platforms can be used to develop wider outreach to varied demographics depending on their information needs

Opportunities for engagement (cont.)

- The populace can be given an opportunity through increased voluntary activities in public domains where they have access to additional information about their governing political processes (Ekman, 2012).

- Members of all socioeconomic status and minority groups can access the internet through public domains and therefore have an increased access to gaining knowledge and actively having their voice heard through these connections (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011).

- Likeminded individuals can connect through social media and form larger groups that provide the confidence to pursue the desired changes.

Opportunities for engagement (cont.)

- Modernity has provided platforms where individuals can participate in political processes with lesser time without hampering their basic responsibilities or forcing them to forgo their fundamental rights expressed through civic participation.

- The massiveness of globalization has essentially made it clear to the younger generation how small the world actually is and how many people view the world in a similar fashion (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011).
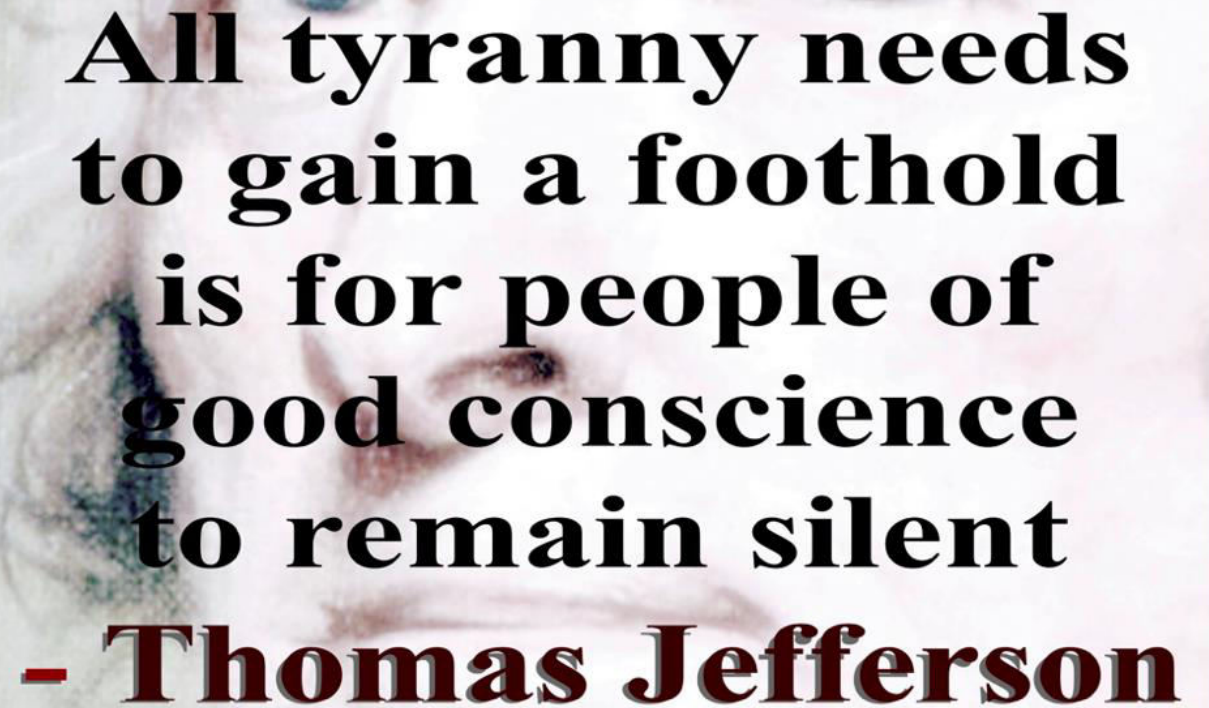
Creation of opportunities

- There are notable benefits that some individuals pass by remaining silent in democratic processes that have been designed to be inclusive and accommodative of every person's interests (Skocpol & Fiorina, 2012).

- While it is clear that the opportunities for civic engagement have expanded in modernity, it is also noted that many individuals still opt to remain silent in the democratic process.

Creation of opportunities (cont.)

- Limited participation has not only hindered the progress of democracy but has also served to set back the progress that has been made in the past (White, Van Scotter, Hartoonian, & Davis, 2007).

- With active engagement, elements of democracy are emphasized to avoid tyranny and absolute inequalities.

- All elements of democracy are dependent upon the participation of the constituents and, without such participation, a tyranny is possible and inequality is an absolute result (Ekman and Amna, 2012).

All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent
- Thomas Jefferson

Creation of opportunities (cont.)

Even though this is common knowledge in the United States, Ekman and Amna (2012) show concern for the continued falling of civic engagement.

Concerns of falling civic engagement

When the minorities do not speak up for fear of rejection, the minorities are not represented (Ekman & Aman, 2012)

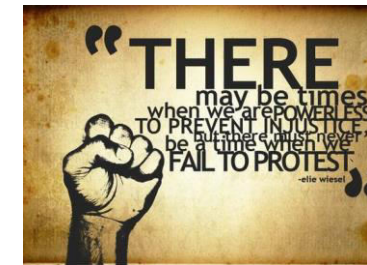SPEAK UP EVEN IF YOUR VOICE SHAKES

MINORITY RIGHTS!

Concerns of falling civic engagement (cont.)

When injustices are not fought against by the people, then the government continues to allow or promote these injustices (Ekman & Ahan, 2012).

INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

"THERE may be times when we are powerless TO PREVENT INJUSTICE, but there must never be a time when we FAIL TO PROTEST. -elie wiesel

intolerance discrimination prejudice rights racism social

Concerns of falling civic engagement (cont.)

- If the ideologies of the people are not expressed then the ideologies of the few in office will become the social norms and foundations of the infrastructure (Ekman & Aman, 2012).

- All that will be left is the right for those who did not participate to complain about the outcome.

- That is, of course, until that right is revoked by a government that has not been addressed by the people.
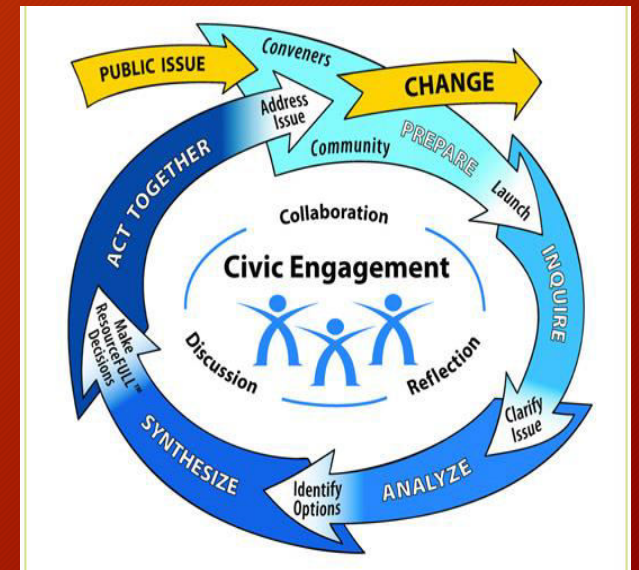
Benefits of civic engagement

- Civic engagement creates balance in political processes by leveraging on public trust and provision of opportunities where variety of perspectives are considered on each issue that affect the populace.

- Another benefit is that it offers citizens the opportunity to deliberate on various issues and influence political processes to suit their basic requirements without discrimination or prejudice. For instance, if minorities do not speak for fear of rejection, it means that they are not represented and their opinions are not factored in political processes affecting their lives.

Benefits of civic engagement (cont.)

- Engagement also allows people to fight for justice, equality, and elimination of governance practices that put them to a disadvantage of violate ideological precepts of individuals existing in particular societal structures.

- It also forces the government to avoid revoking, violating, or ignoring public issues that affect fundamental rights of people since such incidences will be highlighted, advocated against, and political processes shaped to institute governance structures that conform to social norms and infrastructure acceptable to the governed.
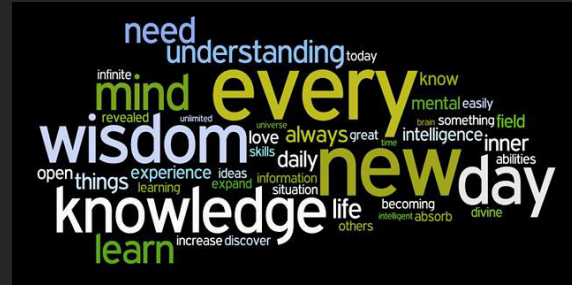
Conclusion

- Civic participation is an importance concept that has been designed to address collective and individual issues relative to dominance political processes.

- In spite of having structures to eliminate barriers of public participation, civic engagement is declining dramatically hence the need for solutions forthwith. These solutions are the ones that make democracy to work, as well as maintain platforms where citizens have the power to influence political processes.

Conclusion (cont.)

- It is necessary, in order to make necessary changes and to prevent changes that would hinder democracy, to actively participate in the political process.
  - This can be achieved through:
    - joining groups
    - reaching out to others
    - gaining the necessary knowledge to work towards these changes

- The modern technology that has been made available can open up the doorway to all of these necessary elements for civic engagement.

Conclusion (cont.)

- Continued research should address the perception of these barriers and the recognition of the paths around the barriers as represented in various demographics to include minority groups and socioeconomic statuses.

- In order to refute the perception that the right and responsibility falls on the elite young adults and retired white Americans, it will be necessary to address these perceptions and present the opportunities in a manner that meets the needs of all members of the society for the continuation of democracy.

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