

Taking Over Our FYP: Indigenous Peoples Disrupting the Status Quo on Social Media

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The past decade has seen a rise in social media platforms, accompanied with new ways of investigating its social, political, and entertainment effects. Social media incites the spread of information about social movements and propagates demands for justice. The different social media platforms give a voice to those who have not had one in the past and provides a place for people to speak their minds. In the past, “Indigenous people across the globe have been left behind by history,” however; social media is the voice that cannot be ignored (Alfonseca & Filardi, 2021, p. 9). Indigenous people, particularly youth, are disrupting the state quo of social media by using it as a modern way to reach the public and bring to light aspects of Indigenous life, culture, tradition, and language. Indigenous people have not had a voice in history, so they are disrupting the status quo on social media by creating cross-cultural communities, fostering social movements, and combating racist Indigenous stereotypes.

Indigenous creators create community in their comment sections, live streams, posts, and videos. One goal of the community creation is to invite outsiders, such as non-Indigenous people, to learn about Indigenous’ lifestyles. Some creators on TikTok for example, find that these communities, “which have been historically suppressed, are being humanized among non-native populations through this informative, creative and passion-driven content” (Alfonseca & Filardi, 2021, p. 14). While doing this, the creators also foster community for their fellow Indigenous followers. Indigenous made content creates a safe social media feed that is an inviting way to learn about Indigenous culture. The creators believe that the online, informative, and entertaining content will be “the way that [their] culture is going to thrive,” as more “people learning about it, more people [fall] in love with it, more people ... [educate] their friends about it” (Alfonseca & Filardi, 202, p. 17). Connecting and collaborating with non-Indigenous people on social media platforms, empowers Indigenous people to share their stories and creates space

to have hard conversations and invites non-Indigenous people to feel welcomed to ask questions. These online communities, fostered by Indigenous creators, disrupt the status quo because they are effectively decolonizing and bridging together non-Indigenous and Indigenous people. Furthermore, online Indigenous creation has been empowering communities to taken on tackling social injustices.

It is positive when social media communities promote laughter and entertainment; however, some creators are tackling serious institutionalized issues and the segregation of Indigenous people while still maintaining entertainment. Fostering social movements is another way Indigenous people have disrupted the status quo. They enact this change by revealing their past narratives and experiences and asking for change. The social media platform TikTok, “can be an effective tool for social advocacy,” by sharing stories of segregation and the history of Indigenous people (Cole, 2021, p. 7). Indigenous creators are providing the information for “people [to] not to be drowned in, but to receive the information in bite-sized pieces” (Cole, 2021, p. 8). For example, Indigenous people can reclaim their narratives and send out a call to action to their followers through hashtags. Hashtags like #mmiwawareness, #indigenousTikTok, and #indigenouslivesmatter are powerful advocacy tools Indigenous people are using to give their following a sense of empowerment and like they are part of a joint movement. Hashtags empower Indigenous creators to become activists. They “create a space where Indigenous peoples can reinforce pride in Indigenous identity, ask the public for positive social change, and build resilience and community capacity to help and support their own peoples” (Intahchomphoo, 2018, p. 86). The pursuit of social justice “for various purposes, including raising public awareness,” is an underlying theme for Indigenous creators, and it tells the world that they will not conform, but rather they will take on the responsibility of representing and

controlling their own narrative on social media (Intahchomphoo, 2018, p. 86). Social movements have supported conversation around institutionalized issues, and therefore, conversations regarding racism, stereotypes, and ultimately reclamation. Social media is being used by Indigenous creators as a tool for combating racist Indigenous stereotypes. The creators are doing this in an approachable, palatable, and entertaining way. They are working to represent Indigenous people outside of a stereotype. They are presenting new perspectives of Indigenous lifestyles, highlighting aspects of Indigenous culture, and “telling their stories just the way they want to” (Hayes, 2021, p. 1). The format of social media allows creators to present media that is made, reviewed, and posted by them. There are no third party, major news outlet, or articles, telling their stories incorrectly. “Historically, non-Indigenous presses often reported inaccurate information about Indigenous peoples,” so now Indigenous peoples work towards reclamation without the suppression from major news outlets (Intahchomphoo, 2018, p. 85). Social media requires an entertaining and engaging format in order for viewership, so Indigenous creators are utilizing satire to expose racist stereotypes. Indigenous creators have “successfully capitalized on available technologies” and they continually use their platforms to strategically reverse stereotypes and combat overall racism (Intahchomphoo, 2018, p. 85). Overall, Indigenous creators are using social media as a tool to covertly change stereotypes, discrimination, and prejudices towards them.

Indigenous creators on social media have disrupted the status quo by changing the tone of Indigenous content. They have achieved this in an entertaining, yet educational, format which makes way for Indigenous peoples to share their stories and lifestyles openly. While Indigenous

voices have been suppressed in the past, Indigenous creators are now disrupting the status quo and being heard on social media which creates inviting communities, fosters social movements, and combats racism. Social media has become a place where Indigenous people can reinforce their beliefs and pride for their culture, and not only share it locally, but reach people internationally.

References

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