The Point: Opinions

Issue 1

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

In an age of misinformation and intolerance, it can sometimes feel impossible to make our voices heard. Putting our opinions out into the world can take a great deal of courage, even if it is supported by rigorous research and fact-checking.

We hope to expand the opinions section of The Point to include even more diverse perspectives. This will hopefully improve the quality of the pieces taken as a whole and ignite even more discussion on these important issues facing today's society. That is what these pieces are ultimately meant to do—expand on the perspectives of readers, old and young, liberal and conservative.

This collection of perspectives will hopefully provide valuable insight into the minds of a very important demographic: high-school students who are passionate about a wide variety of issues, from those that directly affect us, like affirmative action and legacy in college admissions, to what we believe our government should invest in. As the future of the country and the world, we have a responsibility to effect change, no matter our age. Not only that, but we have the responsibility to improve the world for its future inhabitants, and the only way to do this is by having these meaningful and productive debates.

If there is one takeaway from this issue, it should be that young thinkers are eager to share their perspectives and that we should take ourselves seriously.

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The Point Opinions

AA & Legacy

Matthew Kwong

Photo by Kayana Szymczak via The New York Times

Legacy admissions and affirmative action, components of the college application process in the United States, have long been under debate. For a nation that praises ethnic impartiality and undeniable accessibility on the basis of demographics, the US college application process contradicts these principles of legal and ethical equality. In simple terms, legacy admissions and affirmative action both grant students with certain demographic factors a better chance to access higher education, disproportionately benefiting certain groups of students solely based on race. While legacy admissions primarily benefit wealthy white students with direct alumni relatives and institutional connections, affirmative action seeks to aid marginalized minority groups. Both systems appear to subvert the recognized merit-based system and go against the basis of fairness.

Legacy and affirmative admissions both originated in the 1900s. Legacy admissions date back to the 1920s when some colleges began to use the practice to indirectly limit the number of minority and immigrant students, especially Jewish students. They achieved this by giving preference to alumni children, who tended to be wealthy whites because of the lack of equitable education access and the extreme social class gap at the time. For many first-generation, low-income students of color, the road to college was filled with challenges deeply rooted in America's history of systemic social and educational inequality for all people. These students often

attended poorly-funded public schools, putting them at an academic disadvantage compared to their comparatively privileged peers, who were mostly white at the time. This also meant these first-generation students' children would not have legacy status when it came time for them to compete for limited spots at universities that use it as a factor when weighing admissions, giving them an inherent disadvantage in the process. Because legacy admissions prioritize white applicants, it often comes at the cost of student diversity. Although elite colleges and universities claim they want to diversify their student bodies, their practice and high regard for legacy undermine that. In 2015, Black and Hispanic students were even more underrepresented at top colleges than in 1980 despite affirmative action. Studies show that legacy students are up to eight times as likely to be accepted at elite colleges. A 2021 report from the Boston Globe also found that children of Harvard alumni were accepted at a rate of 33.6 percent in the classes of 2014–19, compared with 5.9 percent for non-legacies. As more high schoolers apply to top schools, the acceptance rate for legacies remains constant while it tumbles for everyone else. Because so few parents of color have graduated from these colleges, legacy admissions remain overwhelmingly white, even with affirmative action.

On the other hand, affirmative action sought to aid marginalized groups and minorities, essentially the opposite of the original purpose of legacy admissions. The phrase "affirmative action" derives from the 1960s during the civil rights movement. It was first used in the workforce when Lyndon B. Johnson passed an executive order to prioritize hiring people of color. However, affirmative action was quickly adopted by many colleges across the United States in an attempt to combat long-held racial discrimination, such as in the form of legacy admissions. In 1969, many elite universities admitted more than twice as many Black students as they had the year before. Jerome Karabel, a UC Berkeley sociology professor and college admissions historian, said, "I don't see how you can understand it apart from the upheavals on campus, racial upheavals in the larger society, the general upheavals around the world." Many civil rights activists advocated for schools to admit more students of color, and colleges continued to expand affirmative action in an effort to expand access to higher education. The current president of Columbia University, Lee Bollinger, had told the New York Times, "In that time, there was a sense, pure and simple, that universities had to do their part to help integrate higher education."

Despite the initial motives to establish affirmative action as a way to combat racial discrimination long rooted

within the American education system, it quickly triggered a backlash, particularly among white applicants who claimed they were victims of "reverse discrimination." Robert L. Kirkpatrick Jr, Wesleyan University's dean of admissions in the late 1960s, told The New York Times: "Did we really understand or know what we were doing, or could we have predicted what the issues would be? The answer is no. I think we were instinctively trying to do the right thing." Despite the countless Supreme Court cases attempting to rule against affirmative action, the Supreme Court has continuously upheld that affirmative action will help create student diversity.

However, although the purpose of affirmative action is to uphold student diversity, it has also promoted racial discrimination and reduced college admissions based on race. In 2014, a federal lawsuit was filed against Harvard undergraduate admissions, accusing them of unlawful practices for discriminating against Asian Americans. According to an admissions officer at Harvard, it is because "so many of them looked just like each other on paper." The lawsuit alleges that Harvard effectively employs quotas on the number of Asians admitted and holds them to a higher standard than whites. In fact, a 2009 Princeton study showed that Asians had to score 140 points higher on the SAT than whites to have the same chance of admission to top universities. At selective colleges, Asians are demographically overrepresented minorities, but they are underrepresented relative to the applicant pool. Since 1990, the share of Asians in Harvard's freshman class has ranged between 16 percent and 19 percent, while the percentage of Asian American applicants has doubled, making them the largest demographic in the applicant pool. The clear disadvantage Asian Americans receive due to affirmative action has ultimately led to many Asian applicants hiding their racial identity and not indicating their race in their application. Max Li, a 19-year-old junior at Harvard who did not indicate his race upon application, told the New York Times, "I guess I perceived that being Asian is a net negative to your college admissions." The complaint against Harvard discriminating against Asian Americans highlights the school's history of using similar language to describe and limit Jewish students nearly a century ago, using legacy status to give an advantage to wealthy whites. If diversity of various kinds is central to an elite school's mission like Harvard's, affirmative action has done nothing except promote racial inequality and has led to Asian Americans being inherently qualified at a disadvantage solely because of their race.

Although affirmative action seeks to reverse the effects of legacy admissions, it has also led to the same

criticisms of racial discrimination as legacy admissions. However, more students seem to support affirmative action than legacy—69 percent of students say the legacy admissions process is unfair, while only 39 percent of students say affirmative action is unfair. Clearly, both systems have their drawbacks and justified criticisms. Despite the initial intentions behind affirmative action to seek a more diverse student body, it has ultimately led to students having to hide their identity, which is especially ironic for elite universities that claim to promote individuality and identity. Although racial diversity is an important factor in student bodies, disproportionately evaluating and giving an advantage to certain demographics over others merely because of race is not the way to achieve it.

Student diversity is needed, not racial discrimination and disproportionate admission. Legacy admissions serve no purpose other than to bolster a school's pride, connections, and wealth in exchange for equal access to higher education among students. Whatever is used to ensure student diversity, whether it's removing legacy and affirmative action as a whole or revising their effects on student admissions, college applications should maintain merit- and academic-based systems and not subvert admissions on the sole basis of race.

The Federal Military Budget Needs to be Reduced

Matthew Kwong

Photo by APFootage via Alamy Stock Photo

The United States has doubled its military expenditure since 2000. At first, this massive increase in spending may seem justified to promote national security and the safety of American citizens, paralleled by the growing federal economy. However, the United States remains trillions of dollars in debt, which has accumulated since the military expenses of the American Revolution in the late 18th century. Nonetheless, the urgency of solving such a national economic issue does not seem to be within the realm of the national government's priority, as vast amounts of expenses continue to increase the military budget, especially since the Cold War in the 20th century. The demise of the Soviet Union also marked the end of the military phenomenon known as the Arms Race, in which the United States "raced" the Soviet Union to increase its military power. Despite the cease of the Cold War in 1991, the United States remains actively funding and building its military while simultaneously accumulating more debt. There is a reason that amongst other world powers, the United States still does not provide a reliable healthcare system to its citizens, has a large population well under poverty lines, and has cities living in unsanitary conditions. Although there are benefits of having the world's largest and most powerful military, the United States needs to cut its federal funds that are allocated toward the military, as its domestic issues have been severely undermined by the constant pursuit of militaristic pride.

The debt accumulated solely from military funding has increased exponentially in past centuries since the closing of the western frontier in 1898, when the United States began expanding through overseas imperialism. This hunger for international land and influence has been the primary incentive to expand military power, which the Cold War only increased. However, though this pursuit of global power has been "successful" in that the United States is the third-largest nation by land mass and holds the largest military, domestically, the United States is ranked nowhere near the top. In fact, "the massive U.S. arsenal and fighting force deployed worldwide are powerless against grave, nonmilitary threats to national security—from a raging pandemic to the fact that tens of millions of Americans breathe foul air, drink tainted water, and struggle to pay for food, housing and health care" (Negin). The United States has prioritized its federal power but has left its domestic issues behind, the most evident being its healthcare system. Because of the lack of federal financial aid, local hospitals and healthcare providers are more expensive, leading to fewer people being able to afford them. Additionally, the United States has one of the highest tax rates compared to other developed countries, which not only leads to the inability of many Americans to have healthcare access but also lowers the average income rate and increases the number of people living below the poverty line. According to economist Andrew Beattie, "the increased debt will eventually drag on economic growth and drive taxes higher." The issue is that these taxes are not being directed toward citizens' direct relief, but rather to the federal military. As citizens of a global power, it's plausible to infer that one's federal taxes are being used to solve domestic issues, such as to provide a more affordable health care system. However, it is clear that that is not the case in the United States, as it continues to accumulate more debt by funding the military while simultaneously raising taxes to compensate. This inadequate healthcare caused by a lack of federal financing has proven to be more of an issue over recent years as shown by increasing health issues and death rates. According to a study from Harvard researchers, "lack of health insurance is associated with as many as 44,789 deaths per year, which translates into a 40% increased risk of death among the uninsured." Another study found that more than 13,000 deaths occur each year just in the 55-64-year-old age group solely due to lack of health insurance coverage (ProCon). As statistically shown, an indirect result of overfunding the military is an increase in American deaths and health issues. As iterated earlier, the United States is "powerless against grave, nonmilitary threats to national security," which is most evident in

the increased death toll of the American public as a result of the simple pursuit in a strong military in regards to quantity.

Similarly to the evident healthcare issue in the United States, the sanitation and poverty rates in American cities also lack development compared to the nation's military. Since the industrialization of cities, the United States has lacked success in improving city conditions and poverty rates. Though President Lyndon B Johnson's Great Society plan in 1964 sought to reduce poverty rates and city sanitation, it was ultimately ineffective because of inadequate financial aid due to the Vietnam war at the time, which caused federal funds to be prioritized for the military. However, with no more ongoing wars that the United States is so directly involved in, the majority of federal finances should be dedicated to domestic issues, but this has evidently failed to be implemented. The United States, specifically the Pentagon, has still devoted a significant portion of taxes and other sources of federal funds to overpriced military projects—in just this decade, "the Pentagon was forced to cancel a dozen ill-conceived, ineffective weapons programs that cost taxpayers $46 billion," which included many military technologies that were not even started, such as a "40 ton crusader artillery gun which never even made it to the prototype stage" (Negin). Not only does the Pentagon spend a large percentage of taxpayers' money on military projects, these projects sometimes end up incomplete, completely wasting federal funds that could have been used for more important causes. The funding for military projects has taken much federal attention away from domestic issues, especially in cities that include environmental programs like the EPA that are designed to alleviate urban sanitation conditions. According to funding statistics, "these canceled programs collectively cost more than the federal government spent on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over the last five years" (Negin). Additionally, the EPA's budget is being continuously shrunk in exchange for simply a larger military force. In 1980, "the federal EPA spending, adjusted for inflation, was twice its current level, and in 2004 the EPA budget was 45 percent higher than it is today." This evident lack of funding has severely impaired the agency's purpose, which is to "ensure indoor plumbing to people in rural areas, protect children from lead in drinking water and advance environmental justice for disadvantaged communities and reduce air pollution" (Coursen). These environmental issues continuously faced by many Americans should not be overshadowed by the federal desire to militarily expand, as these issues are what define American development,

not the quantity of our military force. It is evident that the federal government neglects many domestic issues in exchange for building up its military, which ultimately causes the contrast in development between the nation's domestic and military progression. Because the United States has devoted much of its federal funds to overpriced unnecessary military projects, it cuts back on domestic progress, which is the real threat to American safety, not international national security.

American history has been characterized by its dedication of federal funds to the military. The constant pursuit of defense spending has clearly been a downfall to American progress, evident in the lack of development in America's domestic issues such as its healthcare and environmental issues yet to be resolved. The United States has prioritized defense funding and achieved the recognition of having the largest military but at the cost of also being the most in debt and having extremely neglected domestic issues. Though the United States is often considered one of the most "developed" countries, it rarely considers the costs which the nation paid to achieve such a global reputation. Americans continuously living in unsanitary conditions and constantly being unable to afford adequate healthcare should not define progress, let alone development. The federal government needs to stop being showered with money taken from Americans through taxes, as the majority of it is not for the direct relief of Americans, but rather for unnecessary defense funding. Although recently, since Obama's presidency, the money allocated towards the military has been reduced, more needs to be done in order to truly see national development. In the eyes of the nation's people, this is not justified progress, but rather a return to inequity.

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Is Hockey Really For Everyone?

Kai Russell

Photo by Eliot J. Schechter/NHLI via Getty Images

One of the National Hockey League's (NHL) most recent campaigns, called *Hockey Is For Everyone*, was created with the [purpose](#) "to drive positive social change and foster more inclusive communities" in the hockey world. Beginning a couple years ago, this initiative appeared to make progress towards this on the surface. However, recent developments coupled with months of mixed signals have made it clear that this goal is far from being achieved.

Back in October of last year, the league publicly released its annual racial diversity report. According to the report, 83.6% of employees in the league are white. Compared to many other big sports in North America, this disparity is staggering; in the National Basketball Association, for example, half of the general managers are people of color. In the NHL, however, there is only a single Black general manager—the recently hired Mike Grier of the San Jose Sharks. Year after year, the league has stagnated in its efforts to increase diversity. They have failed to find new markets and viewership among people of different backgrounds, and few successful attempts, if any, have been made to change this. Not only has this impacted revenue for a while, but it has set the narrative that hockey is a "white man's sport" even further. This is only the start of the league's struggles with these issues, though.

As a part of the *Hockey Is For Everyone* effort, the NHL instituted annual "Pride Nights" for every team. A good start, one might think. But in 2023, the message failed to be delivered yet again. During the annual "Pride Night" game on January 17th between the Philadelphia Flyers and Anaheim Ducks, the Flyers' defenseman Ivan Provorov refused to don the Pride-themed jerseys and sticks during warmups, citing his Russian Orthodox beliefs. Days later, despite an earlier pledge to wear Pride-themed equipment during warmups, the New York Rangers and their players all came out wearing none of the aforementioned gear. These inconsistencies have continually sent the message to fans of diverse backgrounds that they are not welcome and have shed a poor light on a league already marred by problems of racism and homophobia.

Time and time again, however, leadership has refused to come to terms with these issues. At the recent NHL All-Star weekend in Florida, the league commissioner Gary Bettman stood by Provorov and the Rangers' actions, saying that they have to "respect some individual choice." Players, captains, and coaches around the league have either refused to comment or back the actions of Provorov and the Rangers. Flyers' coach John Tortorella said that his player "did nothing wrong" during a press conference after the game, and brushed it aside. No punishment was doled out, and business has returned to the norm. In reality, the demands of the "Pride Nights" demands were not hard to meet. Instead, the NHL has chosen to dig in their heels and leave many fans and players alike questioning their inclusion and safety within the game. In a time of great social and cultural change, the sport of hockey has remained stuck in the past—and it looks like that won't change for a while.

On Critical Race Theory

Matthew Kwong

Photo by Robert Gauthier via Los Angeles Times/Getty Images

The Supreme Court case of Brown v. Board of Education unanimously declared segregation of American schools unconstitutional less than a century ago in 1954, overruling the "separate but equal doctrine" principle outlined in Plessy v. Ferguson only 58 years prior. As the importance of racial inclusivity in the American education system is exponentially advancing, it is crucial to integrate factual history uninfluenced by political or social bias in student education. This includes teaching students the unfiltered version of American history and its values, the facts of history unchanged by who teaches it in what class. However, with growing political belief disparities, opposite ends of the spectrum have extremely contrasting perspectives regarding the degree to which racism is embedded in society. While some argue racism is rooted within emerging beliefs of people, others argue that racism is embedded within the political system within the United States that dates back centuries. Critical Race Theory (CRT) teaches that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice but is embedded in legal systems and policies. There has been controversy within the American education system regarding whether schools should teach the truth behind racism's roots.

For example, in 2020, conservative activists began using CRT as a catchphrase, claiming it was infiltrating modern-day American classrooms. Greg Abbott, the governor of Texas who recently signed

legislation to ban the teaching of CRT in the state's public schools, said, "They're trying to rewrite history and redesign the future of the United States." Essentially, conservatives oppose the teaching of the CRT because it supposedly "undermines the very values and core of what America stands for." On the opposing view, liberals view CRT as a fundamental principle of the American education system, as it teaches racism inherent in the American legal system and its history. However, these political views aren't as surface-level as they appear. They date back centuries ago upon the founding of American principles. Upon the Puritans' arrival in Massachusetts, they studied many ancient scientific philosophers, such as Aristotle, who believed in the superiority of Greeks compared to all non-Greeks. The lack of knowledge of the human hierarchy system at the time led to enforced racial policies based on one's status, which was also influenced by racial features. In studying Aristotle's philosophy, the Puritans developed their own sense of human hierarchy based on the superiority of white Christians and the inferiority of Africans. Basing this theory upon the foundations of the American government, racism is inherently rooted within society and political laws which are being debated in the American education system today.

Though the origins of racism date back centuries, the controversy of teaching history without bias still remains prevalent today. Since last year, 17 states have imposed laws or rules to limit how race and discrimination can be taught in public school classrooms, according to Education Week. Additionally, laws in some states now prohibit educators from teaching, for example, that people of any particular race or gender are inherently racist or oppressive, which liberals disagree on. Even in the states without these conservative laws, some teachers are under major scrutiny to prevent the spread of the perceived "false information" against American values.

Just last year, Texas passed a law that said that slavery and racism should be framed as deviations from the country's founding principles. In Pennsylvania, Republican officials introduced a bill restricting classroom discussions about race and gender. Though the legislature did not pass this bill, it demonstrates the growing support for limiting the roots of racism in American history, hence the growing controversy if the history curriculum should be more restrictive regarding what it teaches.

However, from some perspectives, restricting or making the American history education system less

inclusive can have its benefits. With more people believing that racism is inherently rooted in the political system according to CRT, there is growing controversy about where whites stand in the spectrum. A recent poll by the advocacy group Parents Defending Education claimed some schools were teaching that "white people are inherently privileged, while Black and other people of color are inherently oppressed and victimized," and that "achieving racial justice and equality between racial groups requires discriminating against people based on their whiteness." These claims regarding the critical race theory often spark controversy amongst conservatives, who argue that whites are not inherently privileged and blacks are not inherently oppressed. Though many today still say that the United States was not founded on the idea of racism and is not embedded within society, the growing relevance of CRT argues that racism is indeed inherent within the political and social body of the United States, which needs to be taught in the American education system for students to understand the truth about American history outside of teacher opinion.

Student education in the United States should emphasize not only racial diversity, as set out in Brown v Board, but also the unbiased parts of history, those necessary to preserve the foundation on which American principles were founded. Teaching American history without teaching the truth of racism's origin is no different than teaching American history without teaching the origins of their independence. The censorship of American history is no different from political propaganda and corruption. In order to preserve American democracy, it is crucial to understand where the growing topic of racism and CRT today derives from and for students to be taught the unfiltered version of American history, the version uninfluenced by political policies designed to hide the truth of racism's roots within the nation it resides in.

Protests

Matthew Kwong

Photo by Markus Schreiber via AP/Shutterstock.com

"No taxation without representation!" cried the American colonists in protest for American independence for decades until they succeeded in 1776. Throughout its continued independence, the United States has reigned as an independent sovereign because of the effectiveness of the mass continuous protests, which ultimately led to political revolution. The success of the American colonists' protests against the British erupted in an international movement of political protests, known as the Atlantic Revolutions, in which many other colonized territories inspired by the American Revolution protested for their own independence. Ever since, protests have acted as a catalyst for social change and have been crucial in preserving human beliefs and the differing values within the diversity of our world. They have historically acted as demonstrations for political and social change, and continue to act as a powerful method to guide change within societies with emerging views. Though modern protests may seem far different from protests in past centuries, with differing objectives and means of protest, they have affected human society for many centuries.

However, recent protests have been less effective as they have increasingly failed to produce long-term change. For instance, protests against racial discrimination, one of the most prevalent issues today, have had little success in dismantling long-held beliefs of racial superiority and inferiority. According to sociologists, this lack

of success is due to the ease of assembling protests quickly: unlike centuries ago, when protests took months and often years of planning and coordination, protests today can be coordinated as easily as a click on social media, allowing users to skip the steps normally taken to join a protest. This easy accessibility also takes away credibility since anyone can join or host a protest, even those who are not truly passionate about the cause of the protest and are merely doing it for attention. For instance, the Black Lives Matter movement on social media was quickly turned from a form of digital racial justice awareness to a form of gaining popularity, as hashtags such as BLM were taken advantage of.

The difficulty in forming an effective protest is that grassroots movements tend to prioritize large events over strategy, especially when participants are deeply passionate about their cause. Messages and passion for the cause also tend to get diluted as protest movements grow, which is mostly why racial justice protests are largely ineffective despite the large-scale protests and awareness against racial discrimination, showing how widespread awareness on social media might not be as helpful as one might think. When it can take as little as a few days to go from a Facebook page to millions in the street, such as what we saw with the Women's March in 2017, a protest with such ease of assembly does not make the powerful statement it did in the past. In comparison, the historic March on Washington in 1963 took more than 10 years to go from being an idea to being on the streets, with many months dedicated just to the logistics. When it takes that extensive effort to organize a protest, it sends a much more powerful statement than joining a protest because a friend is or because social media allows you to. According to the theory advanced by Zeynep Tufekci, a Columbia University sociologist, "social media enables protests to organize and gather in once-unthinkable numbers, often with little or no formal leadership, may also paradoxically undermine those movements." Unsurprisingly, low-effort protests do not communicate credible threats recognized by those in political power. Legislators discern the lack of incentive and ease of assembly for protests, which is the main reason why there is little success and visible change in law and policies. Messages also tend to get diluted as protest movements grow, showing how widespread awareness on social media might not be as helpful as one might think.

Additionally, the recent exponential increase in protests have essentially undermined one another. The sheer number of global protests that occur daily takes away the importance and meaning of each protest,

especially on an international scale. Centuries ago, the large-scale protests we see daily today rarely occurred, and only happened when there was truly a strong incentive behind such mass gatherings. However, it is not only the frequency or ease of assembly that is responsible for the decline of the effectiveness of protests. The extremity and negligence of recent protests have widely reduced the respect and credibility of protests in general. Just recently, extinction activists vandalized Ferraris at the Paris Motor Show as a way to promote their cause. The activists justified their cause by saying that Ferrari was a polluting industry that contradicts itself by claiming to be more environmentally friendly while continuing to promote individual cars as transport. They also stated that motors and batteries for electric and hybrid vehicles are made from materials that exploitation leads to a high cost of human lives, energy, and pollution. Their aim was to stop these car companies from advertising individual vehicles and to reduce their environmental impact. However, their protest failed spectacularly, leading only to their arrests and the destruction of hundreds of thousands of dollars in vehicles. The incident spread on social media, where people simply saw the protest as vacuous and irrationally radical. However, this is merely one example out of many—in another instance, climate activists poured tomato soup across one of Vincent Van Gogh's sunflower paintings and glued their hands to the wall. In 2019, a group of animal protestors removed the ducks on a processing line conveyor belt and used bike locks to attach themselves to the conveyor belt, which led to nowhere but arrest and injury as the belt continued to turn with the activists locked onto it. These radical protests have led to nothing but the decline of respect for protests overall, and they are much to blame for the decline in the effectiveness protests once had. According to Stanford sociologist Robb Willer, when a protest group with strong public support turns violent or radical, people may perceive them as less reasonable, which in turn leads them to identify with them less and ultimately become less supportive.

The issue extends further than even racial discrimination or climate change. This is not to say that these issues are not relevant and need social awareness, but there is a far more threatening issue the lack of effectiveness protests have on people: the issue of human rights in general. Though political protests worked centuries ago, as shown by the successes of the American and French revolutions despite their drawbacks and extent failures, other nations are not as fortunate to have their protests turn into successful revolutions. Most notable are the Iranian protests that seek change in their government, in which the protestors have failed to

establish any success over recent decades, leaving human rights in the hands of the corrupt government. Throughout most of the 20th century, mass human rights protests grew both more common and more likely to succeed. By the early 2000s, two in three protest movements demanding systemic change ultimately succeeded, according to Harvard data. However, just a few years later, this trend began to reverse. By the end of the 2010s, though protests continued to grow more common, their success rate had halved to one in three; by 2020, data suggest that the success rate in respect to the number of protests had already halved again to one in six. According to political scientist Erica Chenoweth, who oversees protest tracking, "Nonviolent campaigns are seeing their lowest success rates in more than a century." Along with the frequency of protests being a major reason for its decline in effectiveness, social media also has played a major role in hindering the human rights movement in Iran. Without traditional activist infrastructure, social media protests are less equipped to endure government repression, thus leading to easier dismissal of the protests. Without a leader, social media protests more easily dismantle and struggle to strategically coordinate. Protests were traditionally simply one-way activists would pressure governments, alongside political negotiations with leaders to build strong and impactful alliances. However, by channeling popular energy away from such organizing, the use of social media has made mass protest often the only, typically ineffective, tool.

However, it is not only the methods of protests that are becoming a problem. The declining effectiveness of protests leaves a major problem and begs an important question: How will people be able to communicate views and act for social and political change without effective protests? Though there is no concrete answer, a major step towards resolving such issues is to stop the radical vandalism for causes of protest. There is no way to truly stop social media organizations, and in our age of digital technology, the click of a single button has the power to spread a message across the world. However, if each person understands that protests continue to seem meaningless due to their frequency and ease of assembly, it is possible to regain the credibility of mass protests.

Laws and policies on protests can also be amended both ways to suit the needs of the people more properly. For example, the National Labor Relations Act directly states that "work protesters retain their status as employees and cannot be discharged, but they can be replaced by their employer." The legally protected ability for labor protestors to simply be fired and replaced takes away social power from the people and essentially

silences their voices. However, it can also be argued that these protest restrictions are good for the future of the people, in that if there are more strict laws and policies against protests, people are less inclined and eager to join a protest unless they are truly passionate about the cause. Logically speaking, to resolve the issue of protest frequency, the best solution would be to enact similar policies to the National Labor Relations Act against protests. This way, protests would be more credible in that people would be far more passionate and truly incentivized about the cause to risk the federal consequences. Until then, besides what each individual can do, not much can regain the credibility and respect of protests besides spreading awareness, especially for the human rights crisis in Iran, until the global population recognizes the decreasing effectiveness of protests.

<u>Masthead</u>

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