**The Tension between Engaged Citizenship and Individualism**

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Date:

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The idea of civic engagement centers on the connections that people make with their communities and the profound impact that these connections have on their quality of life and wellbeing. Civic engagement entails working to make a difference in the life of people in communities and developing knowledge, values, and skills to make this difference. An engaged citizen is one who recognizes himself or herself as a part of a larger community fabric, and so they take community issues as their own and work to solve them. While civic engagement is crucial, the Americans level of engagement has fallen drastically over the years, presenting an issue of concern. Individualism has taken course in people’s lives, where Americans only pursue that which is beneficial to self. However, Caro’s (2015) film, ‘Mc Farland USA demonstrates that there are people in America who believe in the power of civic engagement.

In the movie, McFarland USA, the story centers on Jim White, a coach of the McFarland high school football team. The story navigates through Jim White’s life; from when he started his coaching career in 1964, taking up the coaching role in 1987 at McFarland, and proceeding to win state championship during his first year. After joining McFarland high school as their coach, Jim was at first petrified at the state of the school’s athletic team. Taking this job was his last resort after losing his job. He at first faced obstacles with the head coach, but when he saw the potential of the boys in the athletics, he vowed to make them great. Jim devoted his energy to help these boys win, and he did this at the expense of his own family. After winning their first regional race, the boys realized that they hadpotential and went ahead to participate in the state tournament, where they won. Following Jim’s commitment, the boys did not only win the tournaments, they also succeeded in their academics and joined colleges and military schools (Caro, 2015).

This heartwarming drama demonstrates the power of civic engagement, putting others above oneself. One of the responsibilities of being an American citizen is to make a difference in other people’s lives. In this film, Jim White demonstrated to these students that it is possible to win and he believed in them despite their poor state of living. Jim White showed in this film that there is no higher calling than improving other people’s lives. The theme of civic engagement is evident in this film, and it shows that Americans are engaged citizens but in a different way. This film differs from Putnam’s (1995) article, which supports the idea that social engagement is eroding. This film gives hope that there are Americans who value civic engagement, and they are doing it in a different way. As OECD (2001) puts it, instead of joining groups in communities, people are joining groups that share similar values, such as fighting for environment. Social capital is the glue that facilitates civic engagement, where people work together to share information and cooperate to make a difference in societies.

I envision myself in a role such as Jim’s, where I can use my knowledge and skills to make a difference in other people’s lives. There are so many people out there who can benefit from this knowledge that I am acquiring to turn their situations around. For example, I plan to use my knowledge and skills to connect people in my community to resources that can help improve their health. One person whose actions demonstrate civic engagement is my mother. My mother is not only my role model, but she inspires many people in our community. She is a part of a community group that endeavors to provide basic needs to orphans in children homes. I have seen how she puts a smile on other people, and this makes want to impact other people’s lives as well.

**References**

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