

Panel Session 2:  
Brave New World: Reshaping Identities and  
Citizenship

---

NOEL IHEBUZOR, PHD  
DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

# Critical questions to explore??

---

- Can the Digital Revolution, new media and technologies help the emergence of new identities and improved conception of citizenship?
- Can they lead to a new conception of identities that recognizes multiple identities and notions of citizenship that are inclusive, global yet local?
- Can the Digital Revolution lead to twisted and false identities because of the possibility of its abuse and misuse? (The clash between constructive engagement and Toxic and antagonistic engagement)

# My approach

---

- ❑ present features of the new world
- ❑ examine emerging and dominant notions of identities and citizenship
- ❑ suggest an effective model of a new citizenship, global in scope but with roots in specific local cultures and which recognises the possibility of mutually respecting identities
- ❑ Identify a role for the DR, new media and communication studies in this endeavour

# Some features of the new world

---

- ❑ The new technologies allow for information and disinformation
- ❑ Widening incidence of poverty and the danger of exclusion
- ❑ Great internet penetration but with pronounced disparity in favour of Urban settings
- ❑ Emergence of an army of internet users with different agendas
- ❑ Issues of truth and trust – source credibility versus decoder credulity
- ❑ Dominance of toxic use and antagonistic engagement
- ❑ New technologies are enablers of demagoguery and rabble-rousing

# Some features of the new world

---

- ❑ Deployment of misinformation & conspiracy to undercut true identities and real citizenships
- ❑ New technologies create possibilities for new networks which could result in new identities
- ❑ The rise in insularism and populism, its discourse and its threat to real democracies
- ❑ The rise in constructed narratives and narrow negative depictions of the other.
- ❑ Otherness and the re-emergence of Stereotypes, Preconception, Prejudice via social media and DR
- ❑ The paradox of a world without borders & the reality of immigration limiting structures
- ❑ The rise in identities and the co-existence of multiple identities and citizenships

# Views on Citizenship and Identity

---

## Three components of citizenship

- ❑ Civics
- ❑ Political
- ❑ Social rights (with rights come obligation)

# Multiple citizenships

---

- ❑ Digital literacy can lead to digital citizenship which could also lead to other new identities
- ❑ Identity is who we are, who we believe we are and who others believe we are – three views leading to conflict and tensions. Social media can exacerbate these conflicts and tensions
- ❑ Identity comes with a set of expectations and projections in terms of behaviour, choices and norms.
- ❑ The manifestation of identity can be determined by context and can be framed by circumstances.
- ❑ Identities can be fluid
- ❑ Identity can be thus a prison or a prism

# Qualities of good citizen:

---

- Sociability
- civility
- Self-restraint and tolerance
- Trust
- compassion
- sense of duty



# Qualities of good citizen:

---

- political efficacy/self efficacy
- capacity for cooperation
- Loyalty
- Courage
- Respect for the worth and dignity of each person  
&
- concern for the common good.

# Worth Noting

---

- ❑ Citizen is a structure focusing on loyalty blinding rights obligation
- ❑ Citizenship is created - good citizens are made, not born
- ❑ Citizenship is seen as Identity that emphasizes effective ties & a shared orientation to value
- ❑ Citizenship is a matrix of rights & obligation governing the members of a political community
- ❑ Citizenship exist in tensions with heterogeneity of social life & the multiple identities that arise therefrom.
- ❑ Social media facilitates of the creation of multiple identities

# Worth Noting

---

- ❑ Communication is key to citizenship.
- ❑ Voice/Voiceless – are now recognised as key indicators of governance
- ❑ Discourse key to citizenship - Free discourse not coercive discourse is critical to citizenship
- ❑ Such recognition of free unconstrained discourse opens the door for pluralism but
- ❑ Such a pluralism is predicated on self-monitoring and self-efficacy and a code of ethics on usage, media use and social engagement.
- ❑ Active citizenship is what matters – dormant citizenship leads to the emergence of fascism, tyrannies and autocracies.

# Moving forward

---

- ❑ New media and the DR can be used to expand the scope of social engagement
- ❑ New media and DR can be used to construct new identities
- ❑ New media and DR can be used to challenge misinformation
- ❑ New Media and DR can be used to inculcate new literacies
- ❑ New Media can be used as Disruptors
- ❑ New Media can be used to build a more inclusive world

# Moving forward

---

- ❑ New Media can be used for homogenizing global citizens who are still rooted in valid individual identities
- ❑ New media can be used for fact check and myth busting and the new world will emerge when there is a large enough presence of socially literate persons with flexible identities and who are willing to bust myths.
- ❑ Last words – Given the multiplicity of sources, we face a challenge of ‘trust and truth’ in our brave digital age - the famous fake news which hangs like a noose on our necks.
- ❑ Disturbing is the realization that no sector or context – political, economic, health, social – is safe from its nefarious intent.

# Conclusion ...

---

Identity and citizen construction have undergone fundamental changes – in the past, construction was largely through stories of heroes and models of courage, stories built and crafted around a certain idealism – now it is more impersonal and yet manipulative, splintered and splintering.....Who knows what it will be in the future?  
I will leave deciphering that to crystal ball gazers