

#BlackLivesMatter

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Beyond the Hashtags

#BlackLivesMatter



A question of before and afters...

What did you know (or what were your perceptions) about #BlackLivesMatter *before* you completed this week's readings?

What did you read about #BlackLivesMatter that surprised you?

Today's objectives

- **Mini-lecture:** How hashtags “work” as artifacts of digital culture
 - Connect concepts of agency and activism to hashtags’ use
 - **Discussion questions**
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Hashtags as symbols



Sender-Symbol-Signified

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Cultural resonance

“**Resonance is** not a private relationship between cultural object and individual, not even a social relation between cultural object and audience, but **a cultural relation among object, tradition and audience.**”

- Michael Schudson (1989, p. 170)

What is the object?

What is the tradition?

Who is the audience?



Agency & Amplification

What is agency?



What does it mean to amplify marginalized voices?



Questions from the class:

How can Black people resist the reshaping of Black activist movements such as Black Lives Matter or Kaepernick taking a knee?

How can we hold privilege groups responsible for altering the narrative?

What other examples come to mind where Black activist work is adopted or reshaped by another group of people?

Questions from the class:

Even though we understand that the movement and the hashtag itself do not promote the ideas that only Black lives matter, how can we properly educate people about the origins of the movement and the correct understanding of BLM itself?

Are metaphorical social media posts the way to go? Are there other ways we can prevent people from altering the hashtag to promote a different movement without recognizing the origins of BLM?

Should #BlackLivesMatter receive a copyright and be treated as an original work? How can we ensure that the movement continues to stand strong and not be subject to these alterations that ultimately threaten the meaning and success of the movement?

Questions from the class:

Many critics have unintentionally brought the Black Lives Matter movement into the spotlight because of their critiques around the emphasis on Blackness, which some BLM activists have used to show the disregard towards Black life.

If the Black Lives Matter movement started off under the name of All Lives Matter, do you believe it would have gotten the same attention?

What is the likelihood that Black people would have been pushed into the shadows if they strayed away from Black Lives Matter and moved to All Lives Matter?

Questions from the class:

Because there have been, and currently do exist, co-opted versions of the #BlackLivesMatter movement that either outrightly discount the validity of the movement or expand it to include other groups that were not initially intended, what can be said about those individuals that do this type of thing but unintentionally?

Do we discount the work they are doing entirely or give them a chance to recognize and rectify their mistakes? At the point of the mistake, is the damage irrevocably done?

Questions from the class:

Although individuals across the political spectrum valorize the Civil Rights Movement in retrospect, 61% of Americans in 1961 disapproved of the Freedom Riders. Fifty-seven percent of Americans believed that lunch-counter sit-ins and other demonstrations hurt Negroes' chances of winning integration rather than helping it. ... In discussing Colin Kaepernick's public support of Black Lives Matter and the reactionary outcry, Ta-Nehisi Coates suggests, "It's almost as if the manner of protest isn't the real problem" (2017).

Why do you think challenges of palatability and unity prevail throughout many iterations of the black freedom struggle? Do you believe that #BlackLivesMatter faces these challenges in new or predictable ways today? Do you believe that Twitter and other digital tools help or hurt movements in these struggles, and how?

Questions from the class:

“When we are able to end hyper-criminalization and sexualization of Black people and end the poverty, control, and surveillance of Black people, every single person in this world has a better shot at getting and staying free.” (Garza, 2014, p.3)

Moving forward, do you agree that there are ways in which the message of the quote can be challenged? Why or why not? Are there other instances besides the one I mentioned that would support my argument? Cece McDonald’s story brings up a discussion about the rights of people who identify as LGBTQ and the treatment they face with regard to incarceration. Do you think that there is a way to address the issue of placing transgender individuals in prisons where they do not identify with the assigned gender or does creating gender neutral prisons only contribute to the money making business of the prison system (creating new prisons, filling quotas by arresting people to take up space and make a profit)?

Hashtag campaign activity



Acting with **agency**

Amplifying marginalized voices

Educating the public about...

#Charlottesville

How might we create a counter-narrative on the
events of Aug. 11 & 12?

#Charlottesville

5 hashtags

**Discuss in
your group**

Choose 1

**Writing on the
wall**

**Put a dot next
to your favorite**

Report

out