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Tweeting for Tomorrow: Twitter and American Black Feminist Activism

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ABSTRACT

Following over a century of Black disenfranchisement in America, the nation's second-wave feminist movement has been traditionally credited with the origin of Black Feminist ideology due to schism within the larger feminist movement. This division is the result of continued Black alienation by white feminists benefiting from white supremacy and therefore creating an institution of conflicting interests. As Black women in America still face oppression in both racial and misogynist systems, finding community among white women and Black men still proves to be difficult; thus, online activism and community bonding seem to have created a larger impact as a means of sharing Black Feminist ideologies and solidarity. Twitter specifically has been a major player in sharing culturally relevant Black Feminist hashtags such as #SayHerName, #YouOKSis, and #MeToo, all of which will be analyzed in the paper. Analysis will include a discussion, based on Black Feminist literature, of each hashtag's origin and relevant background information followed by Twitter's role in advancing trends in traditional, offline Black Feminist activism.

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Part 1

Getting Oriented and Logging In

The use of Twitter and other social media platforms as a means for advancing social movements and promoting group and individual activism has been widespread among a multitude of varying causes both within the United States and globally. However, one demographic that seems to have chosen Twitter as their preferred platform are American Black Feminist activists. Twitter is unique as it is characteristically the platform where powerful hashtags are first conceived before going out and becoming viral sensations capable of garnering great attention, and adversely, in some cases, appropriation and backlash from communities with conflicting interests. However, before analyzing the specific role that Twitter plays in Black Feminist advocacy, it is important to first understand the broader movement's origin, theory, and any trends within the traditional activism. As this main goal of this paper is to explore social media and Twitter's larger influence on traditional trends and use within the community, the theory and activist foundations will be presented at a level required only for understanding the paper's scope; it is not a comprehensive overview nor is the historic information exhaustive in this regard.

A Brief Introduction to Black Feminism

The origin and eventual rise of the Black Feminist movement in America is generally considered to be correlated with the nation's second wave of feminism introduced in the latter half of the 1960s, despite Black and other POC contributions having been vital to the feminist

movement from first-wave inception. (The Combahee River Collective, 1977) The divide of feminisms likely was the result of Black women's struggles and perspectives being placed behind those of White feminists, leaving the black American woman in a position where both elitism and racism controlled her social opportunities and everyday reality. To illustrate this, Ula Taylor, a feminist historian, and Associate Professor for African American Studies at the University of California Berkeley, provides two examples: First: "In 1921, at the National Women's Party Convention, Alice Paul received Black delegates' complaints over disfranchisement with indifference." (Taylor 1998, pp. 234) Then in 1970: "White feminists' reluctance to aggressively organize against the political persecution of Angela Davis continued this legacy of White women rejecting and alienating Black women." (Taylor 1998, pp. 234) These examples, nearly 50 years apart, show the long-term persistence of White feminist estrangement of Black social issues, even when gender solidarity was meant to unite the two.

Next, in August 1973, following closely behind the aforementioned persecution of Angela Davis, a group of Black women, primarily residing in New York, worked to found a separate, Black feminist organization that would acknowledge the concerns held by their larger community. This became the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO). (The Combahee River Collective, 1977) The first conference sponsored by the NBFO took place in November of 1973 and attracted at least 250 women attendees from all corners of the nation. Those in attendance showed interest in multiple social injustices unique to the group's shared, oppressed identity of both Black and female. These topics included: politics and legislation regarding addiction and incarceration, social institutions such as welfare and heteronormativity, as well as identity concerns of the Black woman's image in the media and relations among one another. (Taylor, 1998) With these ideologies in place, Black women finally had a majority voice in their

own feminist movement. The significance of this more inclusive and greatly transformative feminism can be summarized well by a mere three lines from the Black feminists of the Combahee River Collective's 1977 statement: "We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation is us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters, and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work."

Black Feminist Theory and Praxis

Modern Black Feminist Theory is intersectional, meaning it acknowledges and addresses that multiple factors and oppressions work simultaneously to create the social realities that Black women face. (Crenshaw, 1989) With that said, Black Feminist Theory has a strong and generally accepted structure consisting of four main pillars, or aspects, that pull from traditional feminism, the newer womanism, and critical race theory. For clarity, a brief introduction to the lesser-known theories of womanism and critical race theory as they intersect with Black Feminism are as follows:

Womanist theory is, in short, a broader, more inclusive approach to traditional feminism and recognizes that intersectionality is important when addressing equality and equity between individuals of varying identities. The three main ideas within the theory declare that, first, race is an important factor that must be considered when addressing inequalities between women. Second, Womanist theory states that to understand the position of Black women in American society, there must be an analysis of race and gender as they intersect. Third, the theory identifies the differences between Black and White women's historic oppressions where Black women had to struggle to achieve the same rights as the already oppressed Black man whereas the historic

White middle class, heterosexual woman, on the other hand, already had more rights than both Black populations. (Rousseau, 2013)

Moving on to critical race theory as it relates to Black Feminist activism, the main assumptions to keep in mind is, first, that race is a social construction, not a biological actuality, and next, that racism is a crucial element vital to the American ruling class as it allows for social regulation and control. (Rousseau, 2013) These assumptions are perhaps combined and articulated best by Dr. Nicole Rousseau, a sociologist at Kent State University, through the observation that: “Critical race theorists assume that most people of Color experience racism in their everyday lives and that white elites shape race relations to serve their own self interests.” (Rousseau, 2013, p. 6)

Now, keeping in mind the concepts behind both womanism and critical race theory, Black Feminist Theory can be characterized, at a basic level, by four structural roots outlined by Dr. Patricia Collins: The first concept reveals that: “Black women talked of oppression, refusing to hide the rawness of what power relations of racism, sexism, class exploitation and heterosexism does to people on the bottom.” (Collins, 2015, pg. 2350) This is important to recognize initially as it shows how Black women legitimized their movement and began to empower one another through self-evaluations. Ultimately, this introspection allowed women to realize new ways in which they could reclaim their identities and define themselves in a public scope. (Taylor, 1998) By doing so, Black women could combat the stereotyping that was placed on them by elitist and racist American ideals.

Second, Collins states: “by claiming voice, Black women exercised epistemic agency in the face of epistemic oppression that had long silenced them. No more sitting still and playing by the rules of a rigged epistemological deck,” (Collins, 2015, p. 2350) This plan of action stems

from the first concept of reclaiming identity and goes on to support the women that show pride in their existence, despite the injustices thrust upon them by an oppressive ruling class.

Third, “a commitment to social justice lay at the heart of Black women’s resistance to oppression. In everyday parlance, no one else ‘sets’ you free; rather, you empower yourself when your particular freedom struggle is part of a broader social justice project.” (Collins, 2015, p. 2350) This aspect of the theory encourages Black women to think of their liberation as an endeavor beyond only themselves and rather as a larger enterprise to benefit all oppressed populations by “[intertwining] intellectual thought and political activism.” (Taylor, 1998)

Finally, “Black women identified how the complexities of intersecting systems of power complicated everything in their lives ... Race-only or gender-only solutions were unlikely to yield results.” (Collins, 2015) To illustrate this concept, Rousseau breaks it down in a way that outlines each race and gender bias faced by Black women: “Patriarchy differentiates women from men while privileging men. Racism simultaneously differentiates people of color from whites and privileges whiteness. These processes are distinct but intertwined.” (Rousseau, 2013)

So, in terms of putting Black Feminist Theory and its structural concepts into action, the praxis behind the theory and overarching politics is careful and intentional. Self-criticism and continual internal examination is a key aspect necessary for avoiding reactionary acts that may negatively affect another group. (The Combahee River Collective, 1977) Meaning, that by committing to intersectionality within larger feminist goals, Black Feminism aims to maintain shared, community influence and control in order to create the radical change needed to form a balanced society free from all oppressive gender and race politics.

Trends in Traditional Black Feminist Activism

An analysis of literature that details long-established Black Feminist activism has revealed recurring patterns in activist approaches. Trends among Black feminists include utilizing the power of dialogue, emphasizing wisdom and knowledge, facing personal sacrifice, and reclaiming stereotypes.

Beginning with dialogue, in a 2020 article published in the journal *Critical Social Policy*, this aspect of Black Feminism is clearly conveyed in a way that allows co-author Dr. Surya Nuyak to voice her experiences as well as incorporate the voices of other Black, feminist activists. Within this article, the importance of conversation and refusal to stand idly in the face of injustice is promptly addressed by Nuyak: “One of the earliest messages given [to] me in ending violence against women and girl campaigns and services, was, that our refusal as women of colour to remain silent goes against every message, strategy and plan this oppressive world has for us.” (Sheehy and Nayak, 2019, p. 239) By teaching this strategy to women at a young age, as suggested by Nuyak, the Black Feminist response has the power to be significant in shaping the way Black women approach oppressors throughout their lifetimes. This is emphasized as the article also notes: “The activist refuses to be indifferent to the acts and alienating consequences of structural oppression. The activist is hungry to challenge the words and actions of the powerful.” (Sheehy and Nayak, 2019, p. 238) while also maintaining: “It is not the job of Black people to educate white people about racism, I was conscious of the delicate balance of exposing my levels of vulnerability” (Sheehy and Nayak, 2019, p. 243) These lines articulate well the value of engaging in difficult conversations and taking a stance against injustice while reminding Black women that they do not have to justify their desires for equality

by detailing their personal struggles and/or larger historic community strife – that their humanity itself should be enough to deserve such regard. Within these conversations, and as in all activism, change is the goal and silence lends advantage only to the repressive groups that benefit from the current systems and institutions.

When engaging in such conversations and throughout the movement itself, the next trend in Black Feminist activism is placing emphasis on knowledge and any acquired wisdom on topics discussed. These attributes are not mutually exclusive and do not always need to be expressed together; though, when combined boost credibility and encourage community members to learn from one another. In the same sense, knowledge is not hidden or used against others but rather is shared and developed via dialogue aimed towards gaining a better understanding of the experiences of all Black women. Now, the distinction between knowledge and wisdom in these conversations is the powerful use of experience to convey credibility, and therefore wisdom, over knowledge gained only through reading, thought, or word of mouth. Given this reality, previous experiences are frequently utilized by Black Feminists when making knowledge claims and when shared, is seen as a key to Black women's survival. (Collins, 1989)

Maintaining a Black Feminist stance does not come without cost. Showing one's personal sacrifice and vulnerability is a common aspect of activism that many utilize to show the degree in which oppressive forces affect the Black woman. Overall, the process of developing a Black Feminist ideological stance requires both study and personal struggle, given at one's discretion, as previously discussed. Black Feminists have developed the analytic skills necessary to combine these aspects to challenge oppressive social conditions. (Neville and Hamer, 2006) To elaborate, the following excerpt articulates the struggle of prioritizing activist work while still trying to fit the societal niches that Black women are expected to fill: "Women are socialized to be the

caretakers of families, to conduct reproductive labor, and to contribute economically to the survival of their families. In the narratives, women discuss the strain on personal relationships: sometimes marriages and partnerships ended, or intimate relationships were never initiated.” (Neville and Hamer, 2006, p. 10) Further, these sacrifices can create a domino effect. The strain on personal relationships, for example, may put women in situations where they become primary caretakers of children or lose employment due to the possibility of conflicting interests with men and/or those in authority that benefit from their suppression. This is reported as impacting the livelihood and wellbeing of Black women here: “In addition to trying to secure funds, women also discuss the difficulty at times in finding emotional and political support.” (Neville and Hamer, 2006, p. 10) In short, Black Feminists must navigate personal sacrifice within their work; however, showing this vulnerability and commitment to the cause also creates solidarity through shared risk and reward. Dr. Nayak describes it: “In order to sustain ourselves, each other and our activism, the ‘motivating truth of critical response to pain’ must shape everything we do and say. This keeps the relationship between what we do, contexts in which we do it, and the responses we receive, explicit; this requires a level of conscious rigorous consistency and discipline of thinking.” (Sheehy and Nayak, 2019, p. 240)

Black women have been made victims of unjust representation and stereotypes long before the modern term of Black Feminism appeared, and the history covered in this paper began. The reclamation and opposition of such slander has become a large portion of the work associated with Black Feminist activism and takes many forms. In terms of reclamation of stereotypes, the example of the black, female body is relevant. To elaborate, female, Black Feminist activists that use their bodies to advance their work are actively countering a history in which political systems have benefitted from the productive and reproductive labor of their

bodies. So, using these same bodies that have been exploited and denigrated throughout history, Black women can therefore reclaim their autonomy to defeat the oppressive systems and institutions that benefit from their misuse. (Lindsey, 2017)

One of the most well-known Black women in American history, Harriet Tubman, now described fondly of by most, at the time was once demonized for her rebellion against slavery and anti-blackness. Her story fits alongside the still relevant attacks on Black, female reputation and social constraints. Tubman's role in the fight against slavery and its benefactors landed her image on 1850s era "Wanted" posters that read: "Negro women may be dangerous." (Lindsey, 2017, p. 315) This reputation spread to larger media outlets labeling her "an enemy of the state...a terrorist, whose every liberatory act posed a distinct threat to U.S. chattel slavery and the robust economy of anti-Blackness." (Lindsey, 2017, p. 315) In this example, Tubman withstands immense personal sacrifice, safety, and reputation for the sake of her freedom. This translates to modern Black Feminism as rebellion "has been and is a Black feminist standpoint within the genealogy of Black women's radical activism." (Lindsey, 2017, p. 316) Overall, by actively combatting identities forced upon them, such as "dangerous" was on Tubman, Black Feminists begin to change the conversation around what it means to be an activist.

Twitter's Place Within Black Feminist Activism

Following the previous section's mention of reclaiming identity and bodily autonomy, Twitter's place in Black Feminist activism seems to be a means to unite Black women and disprove stereotypes that pervade popular culture. For example, as recently as 2015, Black Feminist Patricia Collins noted that stereotypes still invade the realm of higher education and

were foundations for shaping curriculums still taught. She highlights these stereotypes as “Images of all-welcoming black mammies, smiling domestic servants, hot-to-trot jezebels and field workers – I am thinking cotton fields here, not ethnographic fieldwork – had long served up representations of black women that upheld the interest of multiple social institutions.” (Collins, 2015, p. 2349) Recalling that the NBFO was founded with a goal, among others, of improving the image of Black women in media, Twitter lends itself to achieving the endeavor on a large scale while still reaching specific groups, such as members within the example demographic of higher education.

When discussing online activism, hot words such as “hashtag activism” and “slacktivism” appear as a means to diminish the perceived impact of online activism and equate Twitter activism to performative activism. However, Dr. Melissa Brown, a Black, feminist scholar and researcher interested in how Black women use social media for social change, noted in 2018: “Before I studied it myself, I, too, equated “hashtag activism “with “slacktivism,” lowering the costs of participation...and dampening the real-world investment in it. But my findings told me that people armed with a cellphone and a social media account used them to document offline protests and share information with the masses.” (Brown, 2018, p. 21) Further in favor of social media’s accessibility and ease of use, focusing on Twitter specifically as it has become an outlet used for real-time reporting and news, this speed in which information can be exchanged brings attention to black women's issues that otherwise would be ignored in traditional, mainstream media newspaper articles and television stories. Twitter acts as an important tool that allows activists to connect with the public and each other in real time without the biases of mainstream media. (Williams, 2015) Additionally, Twitter does not broadcast these activists alone; all Black women can enter conversations about texts, narratives, and issues

relevant to their individual lives.” (Matthews, 2019) And finally, justifying the choice of Twitter as the main outlet for study is that according to the Pew Research Center: “African Americans have higher levels of Twitter use than whites...Younger African Americans have especially high rates of Twitter usage—a full 40% of African American internet users ages 18-29 say that they use Twitter, compared with 28% of whites of the same age.” (Smith, 2014, p. 2)

With this background information now established, the following section will dissect three popular Black Feminist hashtags: #SayHerName, #YouOkSis, and #MeToo, in order to reveal their origins, identify the intersection between each hashtag and traditional trends in Black Feminism, and ultimately discuss how Twitter advances the activist trends and hashtag messages in each individual case. While discussing each hashtag and reviewing the available literature, André Brock’s view that cultural behaviors are attributes of groups, such as Black Feminists, and that the group is not defined by those attributes will be key for understanding Black Feminists as a “public group of specific Twitter users” rather than a broad “Black online public.” (Brock, 2012, p. 545)

Part 2

Analyzing Successful Hashtag Activism

#SayHerName

Background and Origins

Black Feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw's hashtag #SayHerName went viral in 2015 once picking up momentum following the July 13th death of Sandra Bland in a Waller County, TX jail cell where she was apprehended during a traffic violation. Bland's name, accompanied by this hashtag, was used on Twitter nearly 200,000 times in the weeks following her death in an effort to create conversation calling attention to police brutality, as it affects Black women, and as a means to demand such institutions do better or dissolve. (Borda and Marshall, 2020) The far-reaching social commentary and overall dialogue produced by Twitter users created a space dedicated to addressing violence and injustice inflicted against Black women as their individual stories are largely ignored or downplayed by mainstream media outlets. To demonstrate this, of 2015's violence against black women, Sandra Bland was likely the only specific individual that the average American would be able to recall - and she was not even an isolated victim of police brutality against a Black woman specifically. Dr. Sherri Williams of American University recalls the violence of 2015:

“Almost two dozen transgender women of color were killed, and a former police officer stood trial for raping thirteen black women while on duty, including a seventeen-year-old who was raped on her mother's porch. The deaths of the transgender women of color did

not lead newscasts on national network or cable news. Top national newspapers and online news media outlets did not publish many stories about the thirteen women in Oklahoma City. These stories of brutality had the perfect elements to become national stories that topped the news agenda at media outlets. The violence was extreme. There were patterns of abuse. The victimization of vulnerable groups was apparent. There were multiple victims. But the women who suffered violence in these instances were not perceived as legitimate victims. The women are black, and they possess womanhood and exercise gender expression that is outside of the dominant heteropatriarchal standard, so their stories remained mostly invisible in mainstream media.”

(Williams, 2016, pp. 922-923)

Twitter’s Enhancement of Historical Themes and Traditional Activism

Through the creation of #SayHerName, dialogue is extended further than traditional, offline Black Feminist activism had previously reached. Rather than protesting within a single city or nationally organized among multiple areas, Twitter allowed the conversation to be spread from city to city and engaged with by activists, organizations, politicians, and general users alike all within seconds. This type of social media engagement ultimately allowed a larger platform for the discussion to be held as Dr. Melissa Brown’s 2018 analysis of tweets containing the hashtag showed that Twitter users tweeted #SayHerName to memorialize “over 100 Black women victims of police violence, intimate partner violence, and transmisogynistic violence.” Followed later by: “Few of these victims ever received national or international media attention. But Black women and their allies used Twitter and the hashtag to link to blog posts, local news sites, and independent digital publications. Most of the pieces they linked to had been authored

by other Black women.” (Brown, 2018, p. 21) In this way, the hashtag became a means for Black women, whose mistreatment, exploitation, and victimization had been overlooked regularly, to find solidarity in one another and create support systems where they previously had limited outlets. #SayHerName achieved such by employing intersectional strategies central to Black Feminist praxis previously overlooked by movements like #BlackLivesMatter, which primarily concerns Black men despite being founded by Black women. This previous erasure emphasizes the need for intersectional activism as minority communities tend to be assigned a single identity such as an oppressed race or gender as opposed to subjugates of oppressions associated with both race and gender. (Brown, 2017)

#YouOKSis

Background and Origins

Twitter user @FeministaJones is the credited creator of the #YouOKSis hashtag of 2014. She tweeted, “If each of us who witnesses #streetharassment is brave enough to ask, ‘You OK sis?’ we might make a difference, however small.” (Jackson, 2020, p. 42) Notably, a year after this inception of #YouOKSis, Dr. Tara L. Conley, founder of *Hashtag Feminism*, went to Twitter to recount her own experience witnessing harassment and intervening as the creator suggests:

“In late summer of 2015, three black men ran after a black woman around Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem, New York. Gentrifiers walking their dogs watched as she stumbled across the lawn, flailing her arms and cursing through the hot air. She ripped off her clothes. The three men laughed as she ran naked. This was not the first time I saw the

woman and her male companions. They usually sat on the benches near the baseball field in the afternoon. Sometimes they slept, most times they argued...The woman stomped toward me...My sandals dug into the dirt. Her eyes cut through me as we stood within inches of one another. I gripped my dog's leash. For a split second, I thought she might spit in my face. Two white male police officers approached her from behind. Before one of the officers grabbed her, I asked, "You OK, sis?" She responded, tight-lipped, "Are you OK?" She was present, not someplace else as I had thought. One of the white officers draped a purple blanket over her body and took her away. She did not resist."

(Conley, 2017, p.22)

As intended, #YouOKSis was particularly successful in facilitating discussion among Black women about experiences with street harassment and bystander intervention, as seen by Conley's contribution to the discourse. The need for a Black Feminist-specific hashtag addressing harassment and including bystander intervention information came from the lack of support Black women receive from witnesses in such situations and from the media removing them from the conversation on a larger scale. Jones elaborated on this as she, the creator of the hashtag, noticed that much of the discourse involving street harassment, in mainstream media, only portrays white women as victims; this compelled her to address social constraints that mold the Black woman into an "unbelievable" victim of sexual violence. (@FeministaJones in Jackson, 2020)

Twitter's Enhancement of Historical Themes and Traditional Activism

#YouOKSis centers Black women's individual, personal experiences while also creating community that has the aptitude to validate all women's stories, similar to the way "sis" implies "sisterhood" in the feminist movement. (Jackson, 2020) The individual narratives shared in this context can draw community members together through stories detailing familiar faces and places as well as unite women from opposite sides of the country through stories of similar bystander support or lack thereof. This support is important in the attempt towards restructuring survivor programs and creating the institutional change that has always been a structural goal of Black Feminism. In terms of current organizations aimed towards feminist ideals and survivor-centered programs, work still needs to be done in ensuring all women are equally protected by re-directing the desire to punish toward community accountability (i.e., the suggested bystander intervention tactics) and away from solutions based on police action and criminalization as this negatively impacts Black women to a more severe degree. (Rentschler, 2017)

Another benefit to the circulation of #YouOKSis is found in the "longevity of the conversation" as the hashtag is regularly found co-occurring with "#StreetHarassment, #WeGotYouSis, and #YesAllWomen, suggesting connections with broader conversations about harassment and other forms of violence against women." (Jackson, 2020, p.43) This then allows Black stories to intersect with relevant, related causes, ultimately furthering reach and impact.

#MeToo

Background and Origins

First created in 2006 by Black activist Tarana Burke, #MeToo was a sentiment meant to offer solidarity to a young girl who confided in Burke regarding her sexual abuse. (Hillstrom,

2018) A year later in 2007, Burke would begin hosting workshops also titled “Me Too” in Alabama. (Tambe, 2018, p. 197) However, it would not be until about a decade later when the phrase would transform into a viral hashtag popularized then by a white actress, Alyssa Milano, who prompted women who had experienced sexual harassment or assault to use the hashtag as a means of showing the extent in which sexual crimes affected women. The hashtag, in 2017, experienced an overwhelming use, as women signed their stories #MeToo. (Hillstrom, 2018) This response boosted the viral force of the hashtag and within the first twenty-four hours of Milano’s posting it was retweeted half a million times. (Tambe, 2018) While Twitter’s effect on boosting the movement overall was profound and beneficial, the erasure of Burke as the perceived creator would go on to show the further perpetuation of historic Black exclusion in traditional feminist groups. Further, applying critical race theory to the feminism behind the viral #MeToo movement reveals important insights as to whether the hashtag has truly been appropriated as a white women’s movement. Sexual violence and harassment are not strictly white women’s problems but if studying US media coverage of the movement as a cultural outsider, one would notice that most spokespersons as well as sympathies towards scandals centers white women’s pain. (Tambe, 2018)

Twitter’s Enhancement of Historical Themes and Traditional Activism

The concept of combating stereotypes via the reclamation of the Black female body and autonomy plays a quite apparent role within the #MeToo movement. A particularly interesting case of harassment that was brought up during the height of the hashtag's popularity was the 1991 testimony of Anita Hill against U.S. Supreme Court Justice nominee, Clarence Thomas, regarding sexual harassment. (Gómez and Gobin, 2019) This case’s resurfacing was revisited in

order to highlight unbalanced expectations placed on Black women: Hill was placed in a position where her race and gender were at conflicting interests as she could “save a Black man (e.g., Clarence Thomas), protect a Black Supreme Court seat, and uplift the Black community through silence following her victimization - allowing the mistreatment of her body and autonomy for the sake of the Black community. Given this dynamic, and after Hill decided to speak on Thomas’ harassment, some in the Black community deemed Hill a traitor for exposing the mistreatment she sustained from Thomas. (Gómez and Gobin, 2019) This brings to light another example of Black women being on the fringe of differing racial and gender oppressions where they are not fully protected within either group. Considering this, Hill, and other women with similar #MeToo experiences, that they choose to share, are utilizing another Black Feminist activist approach of revealing vulnerability and making a personal sacrifice of reputation within one of the two communities in which she “belongs”.

Final Thoughts

When considering the historic background demonstrating an initial need for Black Feminism and understanding its trends in activism, both before and after being shared on Twitter, my main point from this review and analysis is showing that online hashtags function as a real form of cultural expression and, in the case of Black Feminism specifically, offer a divergence from mainstream media and norms that tend to serve those in power first. These viral tweets create community, encourage solidarity, and combat stereotypes through narrative and via the words and efforts of Black women directly.

In short, activists able to move into the online sphere and specifically utilize hashtags as a means of audience interaction seem to be successful in advancing political and social ideologies. Now, a topic not discussed in detail but mentioned briefly in Chapter 2's analysis of #MeToo is the concept of movement appropriation and even erasure of original contributors behind popular hashtags and trends. I feel that this phenomenon is worth discussing a bit more, and in closing, as it has become commonplace for viral tweets and trends to lose context throughout their lifecycles despite the relative permanency of online dialogue as compared to spoken word. In terms of activism, this can cause issues in the hijacking of movements and loss of original meaning – potentially causing issues in impact and overall audience response. If Black Feminism is moving in the direction towards online organization and activism, ally communities will have to take up some of the work and support such content to ensure that the original creators are being recognized and have a say in what larger conversations are created.

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Additional Acceptance into Nonprofit Management AAP Certificate Program

B.A., Anthropology, 2021, The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA
Completed Honors Thesis April 2021:
Tweeting for Tomorrow: Twitter and American Black Feminist Activism

Honors and Awards

- President's Freshman Award (SP 2018)
- Admitted in the Schreyer Honors College (SP 2018)
- Penn State Beaver Campus Honors Award (SP 2018 and SP 2019)
- Archaeological Institute of America PSU Matson Student Member Fellowship (FA 2019)

Memberships

- Lambda Alpha, National Anthropology Honor Society, Member (FA 2019 – Present)
- The National Society of Leadership and Success, Member (FA 2019 – Present)
- Student Member of the American Anthropological Association (FA 2020 – Present)
 - Council for Museum Anthropology AAA Group (FA 2020 – Present)
- Triota, National Women's, Gender, Sexuality Studies Honor Society, Member (SP 2021)
- Phi Alpha Theta, National History Honor Society, Member (SP 2021)
- Nom de Plume Society, Pittsburgh-Based Book Club, Member (Jan 2021 – Present)

Professional Experience

Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, Museum of Natural History May 2021 – Nov. 2021
Collections Intern, Dept. of Invertebrate Paleontology

Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Science Center Dec. 2020 - Present
Program Presenter I, Gallery Experiences Dept.

Penn State University All-Sports Museum Sept. 2019 – March 2020
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