

# Talking Race

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Tuesday, March 27, 2018, at 7 p.m.  
Friends of the USC Libraries Lecture Hall  
Doheny Memorial Library 240

### ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

- **MEREDITH D. CLARK** wrote her dissertation on Black Twitter. She was formerly a newspaper journalist.
- **KAREN GRIGSBY BATES** is an L.A.-based correspondent for NPR News
- **FEMINISTA JONES** is a social worker, blogger, and novelist (*Push the Button*). In 2014, she launched a global anti-street harassment campaign (#YouOKSis) and a National Moment of Silence protesting police brutality (#NMOS14), both of which received international media attention. *The Root* called her one of the “Top 100 Black Social Influencers.”
- **FÉLIX GUTIÉRREZ** is a professor of journalism and communication at USC who focuses on racial diversity and media.

### BLACK TWITTER

There is no single identity or worldview that defines Black Twitter, but there is also no doubt that Black Twitter is an influential force in today’s media landscape. It has been defined variously as “a collective of active, primarily African American Twitter users who have created a virtual community . . . [and are] proving adept at bringing about a wide range of sociopolitical changes” (Feminista Jones), a “high-density, influential network” with a “high level of reciprocity” (Farhad Manjoo), and “a social construct created by a self-selecting community of users to describe aspects of black American society through their use of the Twitter platform. Not everyone on Black Twitter is black, and not everyone who is black is represented by Black Twitter” (Apyrl Williams and Doris Domoszlai).

There are other social-media subcultures, but Black Twitter is notably large. For instance, the Knight Foundation recently looked at tweets from 2015 and 2016 and found that more than 36.7 million tweets matched one of Black Twitter’s hashtags, compared to 8 million for Feminist Twitter hashtags and 1.2 million for Asian American Twitter hash tags.



# BLACK LIVES MATTER

## #BLACKLIVESMATTER

In a sense, the Black Lives Matter movement was born on social media. In 2013, after George Zimmerman was acquitted of the murder of Trayvon Martin, organizer Alicia Garza wrote on Facebook, “I continue to be surprised at how little Black lives matter. And I will continue that. stop giving up on black life ... black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter.” Later that night, her friend Patrisse Cullors, also an organizer for racial justice, responded with the comment, “#blacklivesmatter.” It was the start of a new chapter in the multigenerational, international struggle for justice and liberation for Black people. Cullors and Garza, as well as the third Black Lives Matter co-founder, Opal Tometi, had been organizing around racial justice, and for Black lives, on social media as well as in many other spheres for years, and Black Lives Matter grew out of that work. Today, the global Black Lives Matter network engages in both online and offline activism and organizing. #BlackLivesMatter is one of the most influential hashtags of all time.

# me too.

## #METOO

In October 2017, the hashtag #MeToo went viral after actor Alyssa Milano tweeted, “If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote ‘Me too.’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.” But #MeToo started years before, when activist and organizer Tarana Burke used the phrase in youth workshops as well as on MySpace as early as 2006 as part of a grassroots campaign to promote “empowerment through empathy” among women of color who have experienced sexual abuse. And there have been other hashtag campaigns to address sexual violence, including Feminista Jones’s #YouOKSis and #SurvivorLoveLetter.

## A 2018 REPORT BY THE KNIGHT FOUNDATION FOUND THAT

- Conventional journalists today look to social-media subcultures as a source of news
- Meanwhile, marginalized groups are creating their own news on social media, covering stories important to their communities that mainstream media fails to report on
- Trust in conventional media is especially low among Black, feminist, and Asian American social-media communities

## A FEW (OF THE MANY!) PEOPLE-OF-COLOR-LED HASHTAG CAMPAIGNS

- #BlackLivesMatter
- #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen
- #OscarsSoWhite
- #NoBanNoWall
- #ICantBreathe
- #HowIMetYourRacism
- #FightForFamilies
- #HandsUpDontShoot
- #BlackGirlMagic
- #LaGenteUnida
- #UndocumentedUnafraid

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- How can social media be used to advance social justice?
- Are there ways that social media contributes to or reflects systemic injustice?
- How do you use social media? Is activism a part of your social-media use? Why or why not?

## TO LEARN MORE OR TAKE ACTION, CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES:

- Meredith D. Clark’s blog [meredithdclark.com/blog](http://meredithdclark.com/blog)
- Feminista Jones on Twitter [@FeministaJones](https://twitter.com/FeministaJones)
- NPR stories by Karen Grigsby Bates [npr.org/people/2100211/karen-grigsby-bates](http://npr.org/people/2100211/karen-grigsby-bates)
- Black Lives Matter [blacklives.matter.com](http://blacklives.matter.com)
- The MeToo Movement [metoomvmt.org](http://metoomvmt.org)
- Center for Media Justice [centerformediajustice.org](http://centerformediajustice.org)



## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

**ELIZABETH GALOOZIS** of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about tonight's event. Those with a call number (e.g., books and DVDs) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g., dissertations and databases) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu).

### BOOKS & DISSERTATIONS

- Clark, Meredith. *To Tweet Our Own Cause: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Online Phenomenon "Black Twitter."* Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014.
- Chang, Jeff. *We Gon' Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation.* New York: Picador, 2016.  
Available in print at Leavey Library: **E184.A1 C4424 2016**.
- Khan-Cullors, Patrisse, and Asha Bandele. *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018.  
Available in print at Doheny Memorial Library: **E185.97.K43 A3 2018**.
- Pickard, Victor, and Guobin Yang. *Media Activism in the Digital Age.* New York: Routledge, 2017.  
Available in print at VKC Library: **HM1206 .M38733 2017**.

### FILM

Alexander, Dawn (writer and producer) and David Massey (director and producer). *When Justice Isn't Just.* UCE Productions/Not All is Lost Productions, 2016. DVD available at Leavey Library.

### ARTICLE

Kuo, Rachel. "Racial Justice Activist Hashtags: Counterpublics and Discourse Circulation." *New Media & Society*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2018, pp. 495-514.

### DATABASES

#### Ethnic News Watch

Newspapers, magazines, and journals from ethnic and minority presses.

#### Communication Source

Publications pertaining to communication, linguistics, rhetoric and discourse, speech-language pathology, and media studies.

### WEBSITE

NPR's *Code Switch* blog and podcast

[www.npr.org/codeswitch](http://www.npr.org/codeswitch)

