

Interest /

Analyzing the social justice movements of the 2010s

Organizers understood the need to rewrite narratives about their communities through digital media, which provided the foundation for hashtags such as #Fightfor15, #BlackLivesMatter, #NoDAPL, and #MeToo.

By Taylor Crumpton / Jan 20, 2020, 10:00am EST



AFP via Getty Images



The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any other agency, organization, employer or company.

Over the last 10 years, social justice movements encapsulated the experiences of marginalized communities whose voices, hashtags, and actions defined the sociocultural era of 2010s. Aided by Twitter — a social media platform that operates as a digital platform for organizers across the world, but also as a tool of surveillance weaponized by law enforcement officials — the emergent generation of organizers had the ability to share their stories without fear of being censored in media. They were knowledgeable about Malcom X's teachings of the civil rights era, such as, "The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses." Organizers understood the need to rewrite narratives about their communities through digital media, which provided the foundation for hashtags such as #Fightfor15, #BlackLivesMatter, #NoDAPL, and #MeToo; and support for Occupy, Standing Rock, and youth-led movements about immigration, gun control, and climate change.

Related

Mother of Atatiana Jefferson dies months after her daughter's killing

Frustrated from the vast income inequalities amplified by The Great Recession, organizers occupied Wall Street, the birthplace of American capitalism, and brought the fight for higher wages to the 1%. Reminiscent of the labor organizing movements in the 1930s, "We are the 99%" reignited the need for unions and worker rights' in the workplace. Solidarity actions erupted throughout the United States. This collective energy mobilized into the #Fightfor15 in the later years of the 2010s, a national worker-led movement for higher wages since the majority of Americans are low wage earners. The continuous call for economic justice shifted political conversations toward the reduction of "wealth gap" as a primary talking point for Democratic presidential candidates in 2016 and 2020.

There is no fight for economic justice without racial justice. In the 2010s, the wounds of slavery — America's greatest sin — resurfaced as the mass murders of unarmed black men, womxn, and children at the hands of law enforcement went viral on social media. From the streets of Oakland, Ferguson, Baltimore, New York, and countless cities across the nation; black death swept across the country like an omnipresent plague, where at any moment you or your loved ones' life could be taken away. After the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012, Professor Marcus Hunter was the first to tweet #BlackLivesMatter. But, Opal Tometi, Alicia

Garza, and Patricia Cullors facilitated the hashtag's development from social media into a national movement for black lives with chapters throughout the world.

In alignment with America's history is the unfair burden placed upon indigenous communities to defend their lives, communities, and land from the evils of Western greed. The proposed Dakota Access pipeline, a threat to our planet's health and Standing Rock reservation; configured into a reality, indigenous youth mobilized across digital platforms such as Change.org, #NoDAPL and #StandWithStandingRock hashtags on Twitter, and users on Facebook geo-tagged their location to Standing Rock, an organic signal of support that developed from mistrust of law enforcement officials. After visuals of indigenous communities and families in the North Dakota winter went viral, and garnered worldwide support, the Obama administration ceased construction of the pipeline.

Yet, the fight for climate change is ongoing. In 2019, thousands of students walked out of their classrooms in solidarity as active participants in a climate change strike — a physical reminder of the childhood stolen from them because of capitalism. “You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth,” said Greta Thunberg said at the United Nations Climate Action Summit.

Related

“Surviving R. Kelly - Pt. II” showed how “Yes Men” culture is just as dangerous as rape culture

Greta found inspiration in Emma Gonzalez and the survivors of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, home to one of the deadliest shootings in contemporary American history, as they actively challenged elected representatives to enact comprehensive gun reform legislation. They collectively organized “March For Our Lives” in Washington, DC that inspired smaller youth-led marches throughout the United States to uplift the rampant gun violence experienced by youth — higher rates for black youth compared to their white counterparts — and hold the nation accountable for its lack of gun reform.

Across the decade, hashtags developed into social power, a cultural force with the potential to hold people in positions of power accountable for the harm of their actions, and that's why #MeToo is powerful, which is a survivor-led movement started by Tarana Burke focused on the creation of space for young black girls harmed by sexual violence and trauma. In 2017, Alyssa Milano tweeted, " If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet," and ascended the hashtag into popular culture, where over 250 celebrities, politicians, and others have been "allegedly" accused of sexual misconduct such as President Donald Trump, Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, and Academy award-winning film producer Harvey Weinstein.

Across the social movements of the 2010s was an evident commonality that intersected across the dynamics of power that segregate us. Every individual, family, and community had a life worth fighting for, and they were willing to do so by any means necessary. Yet, they experienced repercussions for actively fighting against injustice — unsolved murders of Ferguson organizers, the death of Erica Garner, and mental and monetary effects of organizing on one's body. But, the ancestral tradition of fighting for our lives descends into the next era. As Generation Z mobilizes for their first presidential election, social, political, and cultural change is to come because of those who sacrificed their lives in 2010s and prior.

Related

A\$AP Rocky clarifies his comments on Black Lives Matter