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EXPOSING INJUSTICE

CHALLENGING
DISCRIMINATION &
DOMINANT NARRATIVES

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SUPREMACIST ideologies, deliberate disinformation, hate speech, and the spreading of false facts are on the rise. It becomes urgent to expose injustices and human rights violations, and to challenge dominant narratives. This section provides a careful analysis of power asymmetries, focusing on the importance of a collective effort to reveal wrongdoing. Musician and author Daryl Davis, who made a difference as a Black American befriending members of the Ku Klux Klan since the 1980s, and making them leave the Klan, exposes the reasons behind White supremacy, racial hate and the recent US Capitol insurrection. His piece outlines the grounds of the stigmatisation of truth-tellers, starting from the adoption of the informal Blue Code of Silence shared among police officers to protect colleagues' misconduct, leading to severe violence against Black people. Tracing the line of exposing discriminations,

Charlotte Webb reflects on how feminist practices are able to reveal abuses and injustices derived by a problematic construction of gender in techno-social systems, deconstructing sexist representations of women in technology devices. Magnus Ag, sharing his experience as a journalist during the 2019 Hong Kong protests and as a human rights advocate, reflects on the power of citizens and artists in challenging dominant narratives. He brings many examples of how truth-tellers and dissidents have used creative practices to denounce oppression, resulting in many cases in imprisonment and censorship. In the final chapter, researcher on the politics of technology Os Keyes reflects on the meaning of social change through speaking out. They highlight the importance of addressing whistleblowing and truth-telling as a collective practice, going beyond the artificial dichotomy of whistleblowers as being either heroes or traitors.





DARYL DAVIS

Photo courtesy of the author

Known as the Rock'n'Roll Race Reconciliator, award-winning musician Daryl Davis tours nationally and internationally with his own band and has worked extensively with the late, great Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley's Jordanaires, The Legendary Blues Band and many others. He is also an actor and author who is considered an expert on White supremacy. His book *Klan-Destine Relationships* and documentary *Accidental Courtesy* detail his work with the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis and other White supremacists and racists. Today, Daryl owns numerous KKK robes & hoods given to him by active members who renounced their racist ideology after meeting him. As a race relations expert, he has received numerous awards for his work and is often sought by news media as a consultant on race relations and White supremacy and nationalism. His latest book is *The Klan Whisperer* (forthcoming). More information at DarylDavis.com.

DARYL DAVIS

ANOTHER TYPE OF WHISTLEBLOWER

EXPOSING THE PUBLIC TO OVERT & COVERT SOCIETAL TRUTHS

ACCORDING TO the National Whistleblower Centre (NWC), succinctly put, a whistleblower is defined as a person who reports wrongdoing such as corruption, abuse, waste, fraud, illegal activities, and dangers to public health and safety to someone in the authoritative position to rectify these issues and problems. The whistleblower typically, but not always, works within the public or private corporation, company, or group on which he is reporting.¹

In a broader sense of the definition of a whistleblower given by the NWC, I too fit the description of a whistleblower. I work, live in, and am a citizen of the public corporation, company, and group of people known as the United States of America. Additionally, I and others like me are subjected to abuse and danger within the public space, perpetrated by those within the private space surrounding us, known as White supremacy. Racism and the ongoing identity crisis of White supremacy is, without a doubt, the oldest and greatest danger threatening the health and safety of the United States today. Yet at the same time, it is the least recognized and even less addressed. It is for these reasons I am blowing the whistle, which in its original definition means to sound the alarm. This originated when police officers would blow their whistles to indicate to other police in the vicinity that something was amiss and to summon them to come and help. The modern usage of the term “whistleblower” was coined in the 1970s by activist Ralph Nader to give the action a more positive and ethical connotation. The intent was to separate it from negative terms such as “snitch” and “informer”.² However today in some circles including police, the terms “whistleblowers”, “snitches”, and “informers”, are considered synonymous.

What separates me as a whistleblower from those defined by the NWC points to the legal aspect—there are laws specifically created to protect the whistleblowers who fit the definition as given by the NWC. These laws were designed to prevent the identity of the whistleblower from being exposed, which would subject him to negative and retaliatory consequences. Even though a company cannot

legally fire someone for whistleblowing, they may find or create another excuse to terminate the employee from the company. Consequences for whistleblowing include being fired from one's job, alienation by fellow employees, having one's job made harder by assigning a heavier workload, cutting one's hours, creating an unpleasant atmosphere between the whistleblower and his coworkers, physical harm and even death.

There are also rewards available to whistleblowers who fit the legal definition. These rewards are two-fold: (1) to encourage whistleblowers to come forward with information that would negatively impact the entity on which the whistleblower is reporting, and (2) realizing the potential consequences the whistleblower will likely suffer, the entity will compensate the whistleblower financially.

For the risks I take and the truths I tell by blowing the whistle and exposing the fraud, disguises, and hidden truths behind White supremacy, I am not protected by the law, nor am I compensated. While I have a lot of support from those who may not take the risks I do, but who are inspired to support furthering my mission, I am also the target of threats by White supremacists. I have also been the recipient of condemnation by some people who look like me, who falsely accuse me of "selling out", by spending time with White supremacists in attempts to offer them better and more positive perspectives on their falsely perceived realities. This is the story of a Black man blowing the whistle on the identity crisis and anxiety of White supremacists.

The Blue Code (or Wall) of Silence

Omertà is a term used by Cosa Nostra, otherwise known as the Italian Mafia. It simply means "code of silence", warning those with knowledge not to reveal any information about illegal activity to anyone, usually the police or anyone in the judicial court system. Ironically, police have a similar code known as the Blue Code of Silence or The Blue Wall of Silence.

Nobody likes a snitch, an informer, or a whistleblower, especially when that person is one of their own. Breaking the code in the Mafia is a guaranteed way to end up on the wrong side of the dirt. The same can also apply to police officers who break the code. They find themselves alienated by their fellow officers, being given undesirable assignments, and even having their lives put at risk. An officer whose whistleblowing is leaked, may find his fellow officers slow to respond to his distress call for backup. Responding slowly, or even failing to show up to an officer's call for backup, is a common tactic which imperils the safety and life of the officer requesting the assistance of other officers. Ironically, while police officers detest their own snitches, they rely on criminal snitches to feed them information so they can make their arrests and rise through the ranks. The Blue Code of Silence is

what allows police officers to act with impunity and blatant wanton disregard for the law when they wish to over-exert their authority over others who they deem to be inferior for any reason, including race.

In August of 1997, NYPD Officer Justin Volpe responded to a call about a fight at a nightclub. He would claim that a Black man named Abner Louima attacked him when he arrived. Officer Volpe would later admit he lied about Louima attacking him. Louima was in fact, not even involved in the incident to which the police responded. Volpe simply wanted to arrest someone and use excessive force. Louima happened to be walking in the vicinity.

Louima was placed in the police car where he was beaten with nightsticks and fists by police officers led by Officer Volpe. The beatings continued at the police station. Volpe then took a broken, jagged toilet plunger handle or broken broomstick and forced into Louima's rectum while other NYPD officers held him down. Louima's rectum and anus were ripped and torn. His bladder was punctured, and his colon was severed. Volpe then removed the jagged broom handle with blood and excrement and forced it into Louima's mouth with such force it damaged his teeth. Volpe explained that the damage done to Louima was a result of his being a homosexual who had been engaging in rough consensual sex with someone. The other officers involved with Volpe supported his lie under their Blue Code.³

Chicago Police Detective and Commander Jon Burge was responsible for the torture of more than 200 innocent men, mostly Black, in order to force confessions. He would use electric shock to their genitals, hold loaded guns to the heads of their children and shoot their pets, in addition to beating his arrestees.^{4,5}

In 1991 a Black motorist named Rodney King was tasered, kicked and beaten, getting his teeth broken and knocked out, while lying on the ground not resisting arrest. This egregious assault, caught on camera by a citizen, showed the perpetrators as being four LAPD White officers. Ten other White officers stood by watching, and not one intervened to stop the violence perpetrated by their own.⁶

One of the most affluent counties in the United States is Montgomery County, Maryland. The MCPD has had a vast history of racism in its police force. An investigation was conducted and, in 2000, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) and the MCPD entered into a Consent Decree Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA set forth changes to be implemented in regard to complaints of a racial nature including racial profiling.⁷

In 1981, the Grand Dragon of the Maryland Knights of the Ku Klux Klan conspired to bomb a synagogue in Baltimore, MD. He had been a Baltimore City Police officer who had committed numerous transgressions of racial illegal activity while on the force. The BCPD was well aware of his Klan activities but were willing to turn a blind eye as long as he did not bring embarrassment to the Department. He continued with his violent racist Klan activities, and the BCPD was forced to let him go. Grand Dragon White served 4 years in prison for conspiring to bomb the

synagogue. In 1989, he was sentenced to 3 years in prison for assault with intent to murder two Black men with a shotgun.^{8,9}

Through my work with him, this former Baltimore City Police Officer and Grand Dragon in the KKK, quit the Klan and became a very good friend of mine. Today, I own his Grand Dragon robe and hood and his police uniform. He confessed to me that he was not the only KKK member in the BCPD and told of numerous racial crimes he had committed. The Baltimore City Police Department has been plagued with racism for decades. In 2017, the Baltimore City Police Department (BCPD) entered into a Consent Decree with the DOJ similar to the one with the MCPD.¹⁰

On May 25, 2020, the world witnessed four Minneapolis police officers, led by White Officer Derek Chauvin, lynch a compliant, non-resisting Black man named George Floyd on the street. This intentional murder of Mr. Floyd was captured live on cell phone video, while Mr. Floyd begged the officers to let him breathe and called out for his dead mother. Citizens on the sidewalk pleaded with the officers to let Mr. Floyd breathe. Officer Chauvin continued choking Mr. Floyd by cutting off his air supply by kneeling on his neck and compressing his windpipe for 9 minutes and 29 seconds until he was dead. Officer Chauvin refused to allow a paramedic to check on Mr. Floyd during the lynching.¹¹

Despite the negative press given to police and despite a summer of violence following the George Floyd lynching in May 2020, in December 2020, two White Virginia police officers threatened to kill a US Army soldier who was stopped for no other reason than his being Black. The Army vet is now suing the Virginia police.¹²

In 2006, a Black female police officer from the Buffalo, New York Police Department named Cariol Horne was fired for stopping a White fellow police officer from using a chokehold on a handcuffed suspect. Other police officers lied to cover-up for the choke-holding officer and Horne was fired in 2008. She had served 19 years on the Buffalo Police Department. In an interview Horne said, "The message was sent that you don't cross the blue line..." In April 2021, a New York judge ruled that Horne be given her pension and back pay. In an interview, Horne was asked if she felt vindicated by the court's decision. She stated that she would not feel vindicated until all police whistleblowers felt vindicated. She said she will continue to push for police accountability.¹³

A change in policy may be on the horizon as there appears to be a history-making crack in the Blue Wall of Silence. The Police Chief of the Minneapolis Police Department and other high-ranking officers have broken rank and broken the Blue Code and testified in the current trial of their former officer Derek Chauvin in the lynching of George Floyd. They testified against Chauvin. This is extremely rare, but hopefully it is a sign of police turning over a new leaf and instilling trust in the community. All police take an oath to "Serve and Protect". Hopefully, we will see

more of them serving and protecting the communities they are sworn to serve and protect, rather than serving and protecting each other.¹⁴

The Tea Party

During the ascension to the White House of the 44th and first Black President of the United States, Barack Obama, the political arena within the Republican party gave birth to a new movement called The Tea Party. The last time America had heard of a Tea Party was just prior to the commencement of the Revolutionary War between America and Britain in 1775. The Boston Tea Party was formed as a political protest movement created to express the discontent of American Colonialists over the British imposing hefty taxes on the Colonists in order to pay for Britain's debts without any representation by the Colonists. To clearly show their anger and frustration, the American Colonists dumped 342 large chests of tea from a British East India company into the Boston Harbor, sparking the flame for the soon-to-come Revolutionary War. Their slogan became, "Taxation Without Representation".¹⁵ Now, some 230 years later, a loose political party movement bearing the same name was born in the dawning of the Obama Presidency. Although they would claim its name stemmed from the same desire of its namesake predecessor to demand lower taxes, its slogan this time, "Take Our Country Back", harkened back to a racist slogan just a little over 50 years prior to the second incarnation of The Tea Party.

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court, in a landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, ruled unanimously to desegregate schools. The leading and largest racist organization, or gang, as it has been referred to, the Ku Klux Klan, held rallies throughout the South. With a burning cross in the background, while standing behind a podium microphone, Grand Dragons and Imperial Wizards angrily declared at the top of their lungs, "We're not going to let our little White boys and girls go to school with little niggers! We're gonna take our country back!!!" Thus, was born the Klan slogan, "Take Our Country Back", meaning back to segregation. Why would the Tea Party of the 21st century adopt a racist slogan of the 20th century? I intended to find out.

On September 12, 2009 tens of thousands of the Tea Party movement descended on the US Capitol in what was to be the largest protest against President Obama during his entire 8-year administration.¹⁶ Their protest was held under the guise of rejecting Obama's policies on taxation, health care, immigration and just about everything for which he stood. I asked a couple of Tea Party members why they were using a racist slogan. They quickly denied being racist and claimed their protest against Obama had nothing to do with the colour of his skin. They pointed out that the Tea Party movement also had Black supporters. I pointed out that many



Trump in Dallas, September 14, 2015. Photo by Jamelle Bouie (CC BY 2.0).

White organizations, corporations, and the like had been using token Blacks since integration in order to shield themselves from being referred to as racist. While the Tea Party is made up of mostly Republican Americans with very conservative values, there are indeed some Black Conservatives who share those values. At the same time there are some Blacks who feel they can get ahead if they align themselves with White values and that Whites will elevate them to higher positions in order to prove they are not racist. Then you have self-loathing people of any color, ethnicity or religion who will identify with those who also loathe them.

I brought up the fact that they were using a KKK slogan and pointed to the sign one of them was holding which read, “Take Our Country Back”, and signs scattered throughout the crowd, bearing the same slogan and similar variations such as, “Take Back Our Country”, and “Take America Back”. “How can you tell me this isn’t racist? You are aware the KKK used these same slogans back in 1954 when *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregated schools and throughout integration, are you not?”

One of them said he had never heard that, while the other one acknowledged he had but quickly said, “That had another meaning back then, but that’s not how we mean it”.

“Well, you say, ‘Take Our Country Back.’ You don’t say take it back from whom or take it back to what. Instead, you leave it open-ended. So, it is therefore open for interpretation. I think it’s a dog whistle to racists”, I pushed back.

“No sir. What we mean is take our country back from the Democrats, take it back to Republican rule”, he replied.

“Well, if that were the case, I could live with that. Then why don’t you say so and close the gap, leaving no room for misinterpretation? But I don’t believe that’s the case. From George to George, in other words, from Washington to Bush, we’ve had nothing but White men in the White House. Now there’s a Black man in the White

House and suddenly there's a new political movement called the Tea Party who's screaming 'Take Our Country Back.' Jimmy Carter was a Democrat, Bill Clinton was a Democrat. Where was the Tea Party then? Why weren't you shouting 'Take Our Country Back' during their Presidencies?" The two Tea Party members were left speechless and our conversation ended politely on that note. We shook hands and went our separate ways.

The Tea Party had a song written for it by singer/songwriter Chris Cassone, which the Tea Party used as its anthem. Can you guess the name of the song? You got it, *Take Our Country Back*.¹⁷ Well-known comedienne, actress and activist Janeane Garofalo who appeared on MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olberman", had this to say: "It's not about bashing Democrats. It's not about taxes. They have no idea what the Boston Tea Party was about. They don't know their history at all. This is about hating a Black man in the White House. This is racism straight up. That is nothing but a bunch of tea-bagging rednecks".¹⁸ I would not characterize the entire Tea Party movement as Ms. Garofalo did in her last sentence, but I wholeheartedly agree with her sentiment that it is about their dislike of having a Black man in the White House.

Confederate Monuments, Flags, and Buildings Named After Slaveowners

"It doesn't stand for hate, it stands for heritage", are the words often spoken when White Americans attempt to defend a flag that represents hatred and the defense of owning human beings of darker pigmentation. Although many who fly the flag will dispute this, make no mistake about it, the American Civil War was fought over slavery. In the Northern States, school systems teach exactly that. In the Southern States, students learn that the Civil War was fought over States Rights. Yes, those teachers and textbooks are correct. The Civil War was indeed fought over States Rights; the State's right to own slaves.

Not only do many American adults and current students not know their own history, but many of them don't even know their own flags. What is often referred to as the Rebel Flag or the Confederate Flag is in fact the Confederate Battle Flag and not the official flag of the CSA (Confederate States of America). The original CSA flag of 1861 consisted of three stripes; a red stripe at the top and bottom with a white stripe in between, and a blue square in the upper left-hand corner containing seven silver stars arranged in a circle. That same year, that same flag would go through three additional incarnations: the same design with nine stars, then 11 stars, and finally, thirteen stars representing the 13 Southern States. The flag used in battle for which Confederate soldiers shed their blood and lost their lives, has a red background with two blue crossbars forming the shape of an X, with thirteen silver stars equally arranged within the blue bars. This is the Confederate Battle

Flag, most often and mistakenly called the Confederate Flag or the Rebel Flag by those who deny or don't know their own history.

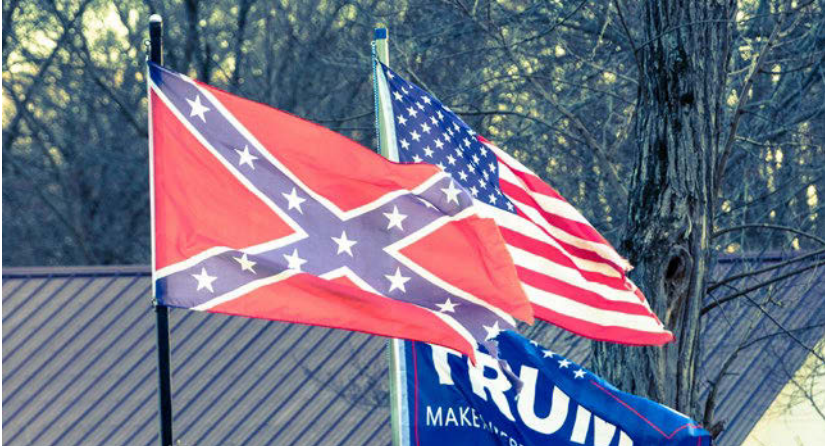
Anyone who knows American History knows that there were Blacks and Jews who also fought in the Confederacy. Blacks in the South were enslaved people who had to fight for their slave masters. There were plenty of Jewish slave owners in the South who, like all slave owners, did not want to give up that free labor and have to pay someone to pick cotton and tobacco from which the plantation owners became very wealthy. The Civil War was fought to maintain that tradition and free wealth. Leading that charge against the Whites, Blacks, and Jews in the North, was the Confederate Battle Flag.

On August 12, 2017, the White supremacist *Unite The Right* rally was held in Charlottesville, Virginia under the guise of protesting the removal of Confederate statues from the city parks of Charlottesville. While there were some people in attendance who were actually there to defend the statues, the real reason behind the rally was far more sinister. Representatives of every imaginable White supremacist group calling themselves supremacists, separatists, nationalists, and Alt Right, were in attendance. Whatever distinctions they wanted to draw between them, the one thing they all had in common was the fact that they all were racist. Despite the fact that they all claimed they were not there to promulgate hate, but to preserve their Confederate heritage, many neo-Nazi groups were there speaking on behalf of their beliefs.

Wait a minute, neo-Nazis? Yes, those people who years later still uphold and promote the values of the original Nazi, Adolf Hitler. Why were the bastard offspring of Hitler in Charlottesville promoting antisemitism, racism, and his values? Because, as I stated earlier, despite the organizers of the rally (who I know personally) stating it was about heritage, it was about hate.

Even Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi relic David Duke attended the Charlottesville White supremacist rally. When asked by an interviewer what this day meant to him, he replied, "This represents a turning point. For the people of this country, we are determined to take our country back. We are going to fulfil the promises of Donald Trump. That's what we believed in. That's what we voted for Donald Trump, and because he said he's going to take our country back and that's what we gotta do".¹⁹

Again, anyone who knows history, knows that Nazis have no heritage in Charlottesville, Virginia. Adolf Hitler was born in 1889, twenty-four years after the Civil War ended in 1865. The Nazis did not even exist during America's Civil War. The only thing neo-Nazis had in common with the Ku Klux Klan, the Alt Right, and the other racist groups that day, was their common White supremacy and hatred of Blacks and Jews. Those who know American History should also know that the United States fought against the Nazis in WWII. Many grandfathers and great-grandfathers of those at this rally lost their lives fighting in WWII against



Confederate Flag's Strange Companions, February 24, 2017.
Photo by Don Sniegowski (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

the Nazis. Now, 72 years later, adult grandchildren and great-grandchildren are walking down the streets of Charlottesville, side-by-side with neo-Nazis flying swastikas. Remind me again why the neo-Nazis were in Charlottesville? It wasn't because of heritage. We knew nothing about swastikas during our Civil War. Today the swastika is even banned from display in Germany. So what do German neo-Nazis use in its place? The American Confederate Battle Flag. Even to them, it is a symbol of White supremacy. According to Neo-Nazis in Germany, the White supremacy embedded in Confederate iconography is useful. It's a stand-in for the Nazi swastika, which has been banned in Germany since the Holocaust.²⁰

The American Revolutionary War was fought against Britain who lost that war. Thus, the United States celebrates the Fourth of July. There are plenty of Americans of British descent who have British ancestors who fought in the American Revolution. While they may respect their ancestors who lost the War, they don't go out and build statues to King George III and fly the Union Jack. The losers do not get to erect their statues and fly their flags on the winner's land. Similarly, the US went to war against Japan when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. There are plenty of Japanese-Americans who have ancestors who fought in that war. Japan lost the war. These Japanese-Americans do not build statues to Emperor Hirohito and fly the Japanese flag. The US went to war against Germany to bring down Hitler's regime and the Third Reich. Germany was defeated. There are plenty of German-Americans with Nazi lineage, but most of them do not fly swastikas and build statues to Adolf Hitler, Adolf Eichmann, Joseph Goebbels or Josef Mengele.

Something is obviously missing in the educational system of American schools. The Confederacy lost the War to the Union. This is the United States of America (USA), not the Confederate States of America (CSA). The descendants of

those Confederate soldiers need to accept it and get over it. The loser does not get to build their statues and fly their flags on the winner's land. Until that is accepted we will be the DSA (Divided States of America).

I am a firm believer that history needs to be preserved; the good, the bad, the ugly, and the shameful. I do not believe Confederate statues, monuments, flags, and buildings named after slave owners should be ripped down and destroyed, leaving no trace of their existence. I believe that the names on the buildings should be changed and the statues and flags should be placed in a museum or Confederate Memorial Park. Just as there is much we can learn from the items in a Holocaust Museum, Americans should learn equally from their good history as well as from their historical mistakes and wrongdoing.

The US Capitol Insurrection

Predicated on his lie about the Presidential Election being stolen from him, on January 6, 2021, the 45th President of the United States of America, Donald J. Trump, rallied his radicalized base of supporters. Trump then gave a lecture to them in which he used the phrase, "Take back our country", telling them strength must be used and to not show weakness.²¹ Trump then sent them on a mission of insurrection to the US Capitol for the purpose of overturning the election results and declaring him the winner. During his Presidential campaign speeches in 2015, Trump had promised to, "Take our country back".²²

Donald Trump certainly by no means invented racism and White supremacy. But since becoming President of the United States, he has definitely catered to it and emboldened it to a higher degree than we've seen since the 1960s. Racism and White supremacy have always existed in this country, just under the rug. Trump ripped up the carpet and exposed the dirty floor beneath. His mob of upwards of 30,000 supporters stormed the US Capitol, rioting and breaking windows, stealing laptops, defecating and urinating in the offices of elected officials. They brought a makeshift gallows and noose with the intent of hanging Vice President Michael Pence for not attempting to overturn the election results. They threatened to murder Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi as well as some Democrat Congressmen and Senators. While it does not apply to all of Trump's supporters, Hillary Clinton's term, "Deplorables", was most fitting on January 6, 2021 inside the US Capitol.

Almost 74,000,000 people voted for Donald Trump in 2020. The majority of them claimed the election was rigged and stolen from the rightful President. Not all Trump supporters are racist, yet all racists support Trump. His supporters, who stormed the Capitol that day on Trump's instruction, were brainwashed and radicalized. Many of the racists among them had been brainwashed into



Capitol riot on January 6, 2021. Left: Gallows and noose. Photo by Tyler Merbler (CC-BY-2.0)
 Right: Capitol rioter with Camp Auschwitz T-shirt. Photos: EOC/Unknown (Twitter)

White supremacy years before Trump ever ran for the Presidency. While some US Presidents in previous administrations had been somewhat leaning to the right, Trump's right-leaning was at full tilt. His supporters felt he had given them full *Carte Blanche* to do whatever they felt necessary to protect their White race. It is interesting that the meaning of “carte blanche”, is the ability to act freely and do whatever one wants to do. Perhaps that's why the color *blanche* (meaning white in French) was chosen. The term can also be considered synonymous with “White privilege”. Calling it something like *Carte Noir* would never have worked.

These particular Trump supporters realized that he was the only President in recent history whose views on race aligned with theirs. His criticisms of Blacks, gays, Muslims, and Mexicans were unprecedented. No past US President had called African countries and third world non-White countries “shitholes”, when referring to people coming to the US from Haiti and African countries with darker people. He then asked why more people couldn't come here from “Norway”, which is predominantly White.²³ Trump's comment about there being, “fine people on both sides”, when referring to neo-Nazis, defenders of slavery and counter protesters at the White supremacist rally in Charlottesville during his watch, did not fall on deaf ears.²⁴ Instead, it signalled to, emboldened, and invigorated racists to continue with their activities because they had the support of the most powerful man in the world. In the 30,000 person mob, there were more Trump flags than US flags. One of the rioters was seen roaming the inside of the Capitol with the Confederate Battle Flag, determined to take the country back. Perhaps ex-President Trump's “Fine people”, comment is what emboldened at least one White supremacist anti-Semite man to boldly and completely identifiably, enter the US

Capitol wearing a neo-Nazi Camp Auschwitz tee-shirt while participating in the insurrection.

Trump's cult supporters realized their chief ally, best endorser, and biggest sponsor would no longer be able to put the weight of the Oval Office behind their efforts if he was voted out of office. All of the perceived progress they had made over the last four years in their effort to "Take Our Country Back", and "Make America Great Again", would come to an end if the election results were not overturned and Donald Trump was not reinstated as the winner and true President of the United States. They had come this far with the help of a President who understood them and shared their values and now it was up to them to thwart the racial progress America was trying to make and fulfil the slogan of their cult leader Donald Trump, to Make America Great Again.

Any candidate running for President of the United States, would say they are going to make America great, or even greater than it's ever been. No one but a racist would say they would "Make America Great Again". We understood what the Ku Klux Klan meant in 1954 when they said they would "Take Our Country Back". It came on the heels of integration and they wanted the country to remain segregated. No explanation was necessary. While some White people may not have understood the racial implications of the Tea Party's use of that same slogan, Black people knew what it meant all too well. A Black man had just been elected to the White House and some people couldn't handle it. Likewise, Black people knew without a doubt what the word, "Again", implied at the end of Trump's slogan. When was "again?" Was it back when Blacks had to sit in the back of the bus, or drink from a separate water fountain, or perhaps be denied service at hotels, stores, and restaurants? When you've made progress but haven't yet attained equality, who the hell wants to go backwards to a past era and live it "Again???" For the mob of Trump rioters who damaged the Capitol and attacked and killed a police officer, it wasn't about taxes, healthcare, and a rigged election. It was about restoring and maintaining their racist lives.

2042

"My VCR is going to stop working! The world is going to blow up! The computers in the banks are going to crash and I'll lose all my money!" were just some of the cries of panicked people, both educated and uneducated, in 1999 as the turn of the millennium and the year 2000 was rapidly approaching. Conspiracies abounded and this unfounded panic was referred to as Y2K. Fearing bank computers crashing, many people withdrew their lifelines from banks and hid them in their homes or buried them on their properties. Of course, Y2K came, and the world continued spinning on its axis and revolving around the sun. Bank computers did not crash,

and VCRs continued to work for those people who were a little behind in upgrading to DVD players and recorders.

Now, twenty-one years past Y2K, many people are having a similar panic, especially those who identify themselves as White supremacists, White separatists, White nationalist, or Alt Right. Those who don't identify with these groups, simply identify these people as racists.

In 1974 when I was 15 years old, Matt Koehl had taken over as head of the American Nazi Party after its founder and leader George Lincoln Rockwell was murdered by one of his own American Nazis named John Palter. Matt Koehl told me that I and all Blacks would be shipped back to Africa and that all Jews would be sent to Israel. If we did not go voluntarily, we would all be exterminated in the upcoming race war. That was the first time I had heard the term "race war". I would later learn it was also referred to by White supremacists as RaHoWa, an acronym for Racial Holy War. More recently it is also referred to as "The Boogaloo". Eight years later in 1982, as a 22-year-old adult, I met Matt Koehl again. He told me the White race was committing genocide through miscegenation with mud races such as mine and that his Aryan race was becoming a mongrel race as a result. He then reminded me of the upcoming race war and told me that my skin color was my uniform and it was the uniform of the enemy.

Twenty-five years after meeting him, some of Matt Koehl's fears were becoming realized. White Flight is defined as White people moving out from an all-White neighborhood when non-Whites begin moving in and the neighborhood becomes more diverse. These particular White people take flight to another all-White neighborhood. It's not too long before they start "flying" again.

Today, White flight barely exists, because the color of the American landscape has changed so much that no matter where White people go, there is someone else already there who does not look like them. What I am told by KKK, neo-Nazi, and Alt Right members is, "Daryl, I don't want my grandkids to be brown". They refer to it as, "The Browning of America", and "White Genocide". Some of these people were not even born the first time I met Matt Koehl, but they continue to echo his sentiments.

According to US Census estimates and those who monitor populations, it is well-believed and expertly projected that the year 2042 will render the United States 50% White and 50% non-White for the first time in its history. Some sources speculate that Whites will become the minority population in the US in 2042, for the first time since before the killing off of Native American Indians and the banishing of survivors of that population to reservations.²⁵ While the number of White Americans who accept and welcome this transition is high, there are a good many others who do not want to accept this evolution and are ready to stop it in its tracks. They hide behind fighting illegal immigration, preserving racist statues and flags under the guise of heritage as opposed to hate. Their concern over illegal

immigration is not about those coming from Canada, the UK, or Eastern Europe, but more about those coming from Haiti and African countries, or as President Trump put it, coming from “shithole countries”.

Believing their only hope to take their country back was to overturn the election and reinstall Trump as President, around 30,000 of his supporters wearing his slogan MAGA (Make America Great Again) hats stormed the US Capitol and rioted in a failed insurrection that resulted in six deaths, including Trump’s racist thugs murdering a Capitol Police officer.²⁶ Some of these racists marched through the Capitol carrying Trump flags as well as the Confederate Battle Flag, ravishing the personal belonging of Congressmen and Senators, while destroying government property and displaying a total disregard for American Democracy. Depending upon how one may wish to look at it, perhaps at the end of his four years, President Donald J. Trump did fulfil his promise to Make America Great Again. He practically destroyed his own political party, the Republican Party, and cost the Republicans the Presidency, the Senate, and the House. That will be his legacy, and if that is his definition of Making America Great Again, he certainly achieved it.

Now his base is left with a broken, defeated, and deflated leader. They will be left to their own devices to change the course of the country and save it from the impending doom they predict will happen in 21 years from now, when unless they declare RaHoWa, their world of White supremacy will end. As their Doomsday approaches, more and more groups are promoting fear as a recruitment tool, with the promise to once again, “Take Our Country Back”. When these groups don’t move fast enough, some of their members strike out on their own, figuring, “If the Klan can’t do it and the neo-Nazis and Alt Right can’t do it, I’ll do it myself”. Thus appears the creation that is known as the lone wolf. These are the radicalized soloists who walk into a Black church in Charleston, South Carolina and murder 9 Black people conducting Bible study,²⁷ or walk into a synagogue in Pittsburgh,²⁸ Pennsylvania and murder 11 Jewish people, or go to the Walmart in El Paso, Texas and murder 23 Latino people.²⁹ All of this is being done out of fear that their White identity is being erased. When the homes of the shooters are raided and searched by law enforcement authorities, they most commonly find a cache of automatic weapons which are being stockpiled for their prediction of the upcoming race war. What they are finding out is that there are more people today who look like them but who don’t share their supremacist and nationalist views, and that they will be fighting their own kind. It is not rocket science to figure out what it means when you combine a past racist slogan with a current racist one. Take Our Country Back, Make America Great Again. 2042 has become the White supremacists’ Y2K.

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CHARLOTTE WEBB

Photo courtesy of Barcelona Design Week

Charlotte Webb is co-founder of Feminist Internet, a collective of artists, researchers and activists aiming to disrupt inequalities in internet products, services and systems by educating and equipping the people who build and use them. She is Senior Lecturer at the Creative Computing Institute, London, where she recently created a master's degree in Internet Equalities, which explores how power relations are organised, embedded and perpetuated in internet technologies, and how they can be re-organised or challenged through critical, creative and activist practice. She is Founding Director of Even, the consultancy arm of Feminist Internet, which provides creative approaches to tech equity for the next generation of business. Charlotte was nominated by the Evening Standard as one of the most influential people in Technology and Science in London 2018, and has been widely featured in the international press. She has presented her work internationally, including at TedX, Reykjavik Global Women's Forum, Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity and Barbados Internet Governance Forum.

CHARLOTTE WEBB

FROSTED WEBS, FEMINIST PRACTICE

"FEMINISM *has always been a cyborg, a notion that links rules and orientation (that is, cybernetics) to flesh and material (that is, bodies) in a way that is not considered to be natural—but that questions the so-called natural".*

Ulrike Bergermann, 1998.¹

Early one morning in the middle of a cold British winter, I walked down my street and saw that frost had settled on dozens of spider's webs that were attached to fences and hedges. The intricate structures of the webs were rendered visible as the frost revealed architectures that would usually be barely detectable. In this chapter, I want to think of feminist modes of thought and practice as matter that can settle on techno-social webs, revealing their architectures, infrastructures and power imbalances. This desire points to the kind of relationship I propose between whistleblowing and feminist practices: a relationship of making the invisible visible.



A frosted spider's web.
Photo courtesy of the author.

I am using whistleblowing in its broadest sense to refer to the practice of exposing injustices, rather than drawing on definitions which situate it squarely as an act performed by workers in corporate or government contexts. It is not my aim to suggest that feminist practices constitute whistleblowing in the latter sense. Rather, I aim to reflect on how they reveal problematic constructions of gender² in techno-social systems and the injustices these constructions reproduce, including disproportionate amounts of online abuse being experienced by women, sexist representations of women being embedded in devices (think sexy female robots),

technology facilitated domestic violence, gender inequality in the technology sector, gender discrimination in algorithmic systems, and the sexist censoring of women's bodies on social media. This is important because technologies—and the infrastructures within which they are created—can and do perpetuate inequalities and heteropatriarchal norms in ways that are not always immediately obvious. Infrastructure, after all, wants to be invisible rather than obvious. Of course, feminist practice involves acting, protesting, communing and creating, not only analysing and critiquing. Feminists do not stop at revealing injustices—they find ways to subvert and act in response to them.

Feminist Approaches to Technology

For centuries, feminists have exposed architectures of injustice, making visible discriminatory systems and practices that subjugate those outside dominant orders. For decades, they have revealed, contested, fought and reimagined forms of inequality that are woven into techno-social systems. The cyberfeminist movement that emerged in Europe, America and Australia in the 1990s was itself a network of ideas and communities which conceptualized feminism and its relationship to technology in multiple ways, but were united in their attempt to challenge patriarchal oppression as it was expressed through technological systems. Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*³—an inspiration for cyberfeminism—challenged binary notions such as nature/culture, self/other, male/female and argued that these are central to Western tools of domination. The figure of the cyborg, Haraway argued, could “suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves”.⁴ Haraway showed that the ‘natural’ should be understood as a form of problematic normativity that the cyborg could challenge since it was a constructed entity (which could therefore be reconfigured).⁵ Australian art collective VNS Matrix's ‘Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century’,⁶ created in a stream-of-consciousness writing session and published online and on a huge mobile billboard, was an irreverent proposition that technology could disrupt patriarchal norms. Cyberfeminism evolved through the 1990s, but was critiqued for being overly optimistic about the liberating potential of the internet, elitist in orientation,⁷ and failing to attend to issues of race, class and economics in its analysis.⁸ Through the 2000s and beyond, cyberfeminism expanded towards other forms including technofeminism,⁹ which explored the premise that there is a “mutually shaping relationship between gender and technology, in which technology is both a source and a consequence of gender relations”.¹⁰ It also branched into modes such as cyberfeminism 2.0, Black cyberfeminism, xenofeminism, post-cyber feminism, glitch feminism, Afrofuturism, hackfeministas and transhackfeminism, which are catalogued in the Cyberfeminism Index.¹¹



Cyberfeminism Index, images page, Mindy Seu. Screenshot, 2021.

The 2017 *Post-Cyber Feminist International* event at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London marked twenty years since *The First Cyberfeminist International* held in Germany in 1997.¹² Expanding on the genealogy of cyberfeminism, the ICA event aimed to “purposefully constellate(s) thinkers to consider a new vision for post-cyber feminism that is substantive and developed, without being exclusionary of contestation”.¹³

The Cyberfeminism Index draws on several feminist methods in its construction. It indexes and links to the work of others, celebrating and strengthening a community of practice. It is made open for ‘collaborative editing and compilation’ through a submit button, and aspires to grow in order to ‘truly reflect the global nature of the cyberfeminist movement’. This points to the ways that feminism structures itself through networks and communities. For example, in 2014, the Association for Progressive Communications gathered 50 activists and advocates working in sexual rights, women’s rights, violence against women, and internet rights to a meeting in Malaysia. Together, they drafted the Feminist Principles of the Internet,¹⁴ a series of statements that “offer a gender and sexual rights lens on critical internet-related rights”. The principles aim to “provide a framework for women’s movements to articulate and explore issues related to technology”. The principles are organized in 5 clusters (Access, Movements, Economy, Expression, and Embodiment), and the wider community are invited to build on them by translating them or adding related resources.

Techno-feminist artists, designers, scholars, and activists have not pulled apart the power relations embedded in techno-social systems by drawing impermeable boundaries around their disciplines, but by critically meshing with others, knowing that no one theoretical or methodological framework is perfect or even

sufficient for building forms of resistance.¹⁵ Approaching socio-technical injustices from a feminist perspective may take practitioners to the edges (or centres) of Design Justice,¹⁶ Critical Race and Digital Studies,¹⁷ Queer Science and Technology Studies,¹⁸ Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies,¹⁹ Environmental Studies,²⁰ or other fields of thought and practice. Whatever conjugations are formed, they can offer ways to sit at the centre of a problem with others, respond to contextual specificities, and figure out pathways forward together.

We might also consider how a productive conjunction of whistleblowing studies with gender studies has shed light on the ways in which imaginaries of whistleblowing and whistleblowers are problematically gendered. Studying the relationship between gender, information infrastructures and truth-telling, Agostinho and Bonde Thylstrup note: “truth-telling practices are entangled in gendered matrices of control that make possible some truth-telling subjects while foreclosing others...gendered and sexualized imaginaries overdetermine what counts as truth and who counts as a truth-teller”.²¹ If normative notions of gender and sexuality “fundamentally shape, complicate and ultimately define who counts as a truth-teller within emerging parrhesiastic networked spaces”,²² they also shape who counts as a producer and consumer of technology in the broader techno-social realm. For example, who counts as a producer of technology is shaped by pervasive narratives that foreground men as the creators of computers and the internet or as ‘natural’ innovators. Such narratives often omit women’s ongoing contributions outside of well-known pioneers of early programming such as Ada Lovelace or Grace Hopper.²³ Who counts as a consumer of technology is shaped by what or who is prioritised by producers of technology. When women and minoritized groups are not understood as vital to the design, testing and roll out of technologies, their needs are under-recognised, and the technologies can reinforce inequalities and lead to negative or harmful outcomes. Just as the vital role of women and other minoritized gender identities in the development of the internet has been buried in favour of hetero-normative narratives of the male genius, media narratives about whistleblowers have aggrandized men’s actions and minimised the actions of women and female identifying people.²⁴ This is not just a matter of unequal accreditation. Being less visible means being ‘more vulnerable to legal injustice’. The under-representation of women and female identifying people in the design of technologies can also lead to poor experiences, harm and even death. In describing the ‘gender data gap’—the fact that the majority of the world’s data is based on the male body and male life patterns—Caroline Criado-Perez notes that women are more likely than men to be seriously injured in car crashes, because “cars have been designed using car-crash test dummies based on the ‘average’ male”.²⁵

Gender Coding in Voice Assistants

Allison Stanger defines whistleblowers as those who ‘expose lies and wrongdoing which their perpetrators would like to be kept secret.’²⁶ However, feminist critiques of techno-social systems often address inequalities that are not deliberately ‘kept secret’, but that are encoded into technologies because they are normative in society. Sometimes such inequalities are hiding in plain sight. Take the problematic gendering of voice assistants for example. The fact that devices like Siri, Alexa and Cortana are typically characterized as female is not ‘kept secret’ from the public at all. It is highly visible, since these devices are pervasive in domestic settings and increasingly woven into the infrastructures of affluent homes. In total, Google Assistant, Siri, Cortana and Alexa are installed on over two billion internet-connected devices globally.²⁷ What may be less visible when interacting with these devices, is how their characterization as female problematically reconstructs normative ideas about gender and upholds the heteropatriarchal system in which they are produced. A 2018 survey by LivePerson showed that 53% of respondents had never thought about why voice assistants are projected as female, even though 85% knew that the default voices of these assistants are usually female.

In 2016, critiques of the gendering of voice assistants were emerging in the mainstream media, and gained traction in the following few years.²⁸ They focused on two main issues: the problematic characterization of the devices as female, and their failure to respond adequately to abusive comments.²⁹

Alexa, Cortana, Siri, and Google Assistant originally launched with female-sounding default voices, although all four have since been updated. The default characterization of voice assistants as female is problematic because, as Jacqueline Feldman puts it: “by encouraging consumers to understand the objects that serve us as women, technologists abet the prejudice by which women are considered as objects”.³⁰ This is an example of Wajcman’s techno-feminist premise that technology is both a source and a consequence of gender relations. The commonly used capabilities of voice assistants and their primary goal of helping people with everyday tasks are associated with female qualities and feminized labour. Consumer preferences for female voices play on deep seated cultural norms and socially constructed Western notions of as women as nurturers, caregivers, homemakers and assistants.³¹ Notice a parallel with perceptions of whistleblowing here. Agostinho and Bonde Thylstrup discuss the case of Sarah Harrison, a former member of WikiLeaks who was ‘central in getting Snowden to Russia’.³² She was portrayed by the media as Assange’s assistant rather than a WikiLeaks editor. The authors note: “The tedious labour of truth-telling, essential as it is, rarely reaches public perception” and state that what is exemplary about Harrison’s case is that: “the backgrounded labour (of truth telling) is not only performed by a woman but



Modified Alexa, created during a Feminist Alexa workshop, 2018, Creative Computing Institute, London. Photo: Feminist Internet.



Feminist Alexa workshop map, 2018, Creative Computing Institute, London. Photo: Feminist Internet.

is also gendered as female: this kind of work is usually feminized and thus de-valued (even when performed by a male subject) because it is associated with the menial work historically assigned to women”.³³

When Leah Fessler systematically tested how Siri, Alexa, Cortana, and Google Assistant reacted to abusive comments, she found that when Siri was told “You’re a bitch”, it responded: “I’d blush if I could”. To “You’re a slut”, Alexa replied: “Well, thanks for the feedback”. Obviously, it is unacceptable for devices characterized as female to respond politely, coyly or even flirtatiously to any command regardless of how hostile it is, because this reproduces the idea that women are tolerant of abusive treatment. Since 2017, Apple and Amazon both rolled out updates to their voice assistants—Siri now says “I don’t know how to respond to that” when called a bitch. Amazon created a ‘disengage mode’, and Alexa even claims to be a feminist (it’s not).³⁴ Google introduced new male voice options to its assistant in 2018 and Cortana was given a male voice option in 2019. These updates may seem positive, but can also be read as virtue signals that do not remedy how the devices were conceived and how they reinforce structural sexism.

This issue reflects a diversity crisis in the technology industry and the AI sector specifically. In 2018 the AI Now Institute found that just 18% authors at major AI conferences were female; over 80% of AI professors were men; women comprised only 15% of AI research staff at Facebook & 10% at Google, and no public data on trans workers or other gender minorities was available.³⁵ If the predominantly male creators of AI technologies have not grown up experiencing gender discrimination from micro-aggressions to full blown harassment and violence, it is not a lived experience they can draw on when creating products and services.

Designing a Feminist Alexa

These critiques inspired a group of artists and designers from the UK-based collective Feminist Internet to explore what a Feminist Alexa might look like, as part of a 2018 fellowship at the Creative Computing Institute, University of the Arts London.³⁶ We wanted to ask:

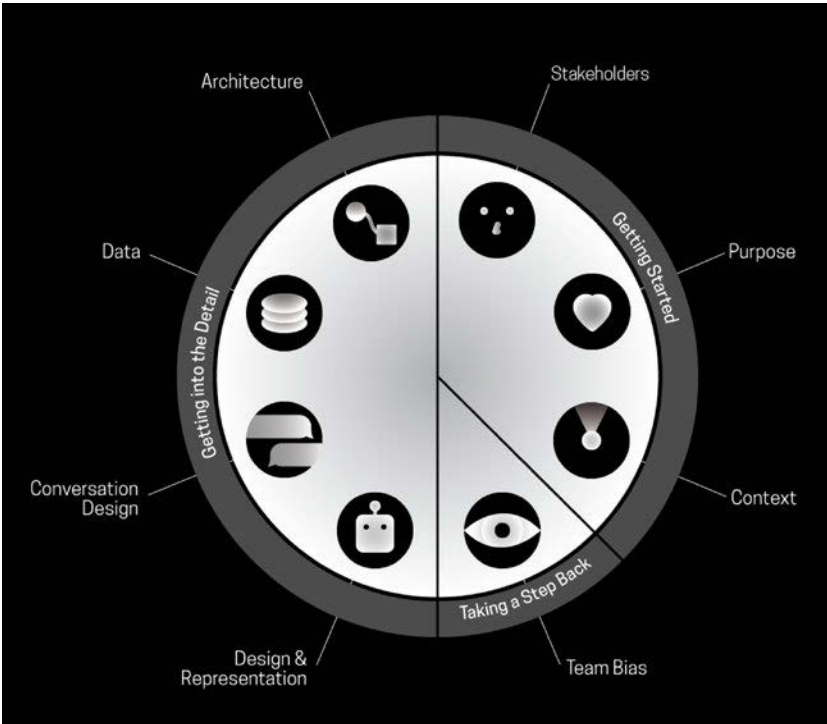
What is a feminist conversation? What kind of exchange between a human and a technology would qualify as feminist? Could there ever be a feminist response to: “Hey Alexa, what’s the weather like today?”

Following an open call across the University, we gathered 40 students and several Alexas for two 3-day workshops, with a mission to prototype feminist voice assistants that would meet a meaningful human need, embody feminist values and advance equity for women or other marginalised groups. We wanted to ensure participants could demonstrate the use of feminist values in their designs, and to scaffold this, we drew on Josie Young’s Feminist Chatbot Design Process, which aims to help designers ensure their chatbots do not knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate gender inequality.³⁷ Young’s process was inspired in part by Showen Bardzell’s work on Feminist Human Computer Interaction.³⁸

We adapted Josie’s process and mapped each section to the stages of the workshop, so that participants had something to guide their thinking.³⁹

Users⁴⁰

This section asked participants to identify a specific person or group, understand their experiences, and explore how they may benefit from a feminist voice assistant. The aim was to push back against the idea of ‘universal design’, which can fail to recognise differences in user experiences and outlooks. To quote Bardzell, “‘Human’ is too rich, too diverse, and too complex a category to bear a universal solution”⁴¹. Or, as Amrute puts it: “most often, designers of technical systems begin with a standard user [in mind] and, in doing so, set into motion patterns of discrimination that are hidden by the assumption of system neutrality”.⁴² One group initially wanted to design for people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. This was well intentioned, but when they started to try creating a persona and reflected on this section of the tool, they realised that without direct experience or access to people with this particular condition, it might be better to focus their attention on a different group.



Feminist Design Tool overview, 2019. Graphic: Conor Rigby / Feminist Internet.

Purpose

This project did not aim to make a feminist ‘version’ of an Alexa, since part of the point is to challenge the corporate monopolies that produce these technologies. Instead, we used the term ‘Alexa’ as a proxy for voice assistants more generally. We asked participants to consider whether their feminist voice assistant would meet a meaningful human need or address an injustice, and how it could address the need/s of the intended user. This allowed them to ask critical questions about who should determine what is useful, and what counts as meaningful.

Team Bias

This section emphasised that we all come from places and experiences that shape our thinking and perspectives, and we can unconsciously embed these in the things we make. If we don’t reflect on this there is a risk that what we design may reinforce problematic or harmful biases and assumptions. By reflecting on their

values and position in society, participants raised their awareness about how biases can be baked into the design of technologies.

Design and Representation

The way AI agents such as chatbots or game characters are designed and represented can challenge or reinforce stereotypes. For example, characterising a financial advice bot as male could reinforce the stereotype that men are more competent than women with money. Asking participants to consider how the voice assistant would remind users that it was not human tapped into ethical questions raised at the Google Duplex demo, where a Google Assistant feature misled some users to think they were talking to a human rather than an AI.⁴³ Most groups opted to present their voice assistant as genderless, or to give it a character that actively embraced queerness.

Conversation Design

The emphasis here was on encouraging participants to reflect on what types of responses would embody feminist values, and how they could get their designs to ‘speak’ with a feminist voice. We asked them to consider how their assistant would respond if it received abuse and what its tone of voice would be literally and metaphorically.

Guided by our collaborator Alex Fefegha and the Feminist Internet team, participants designed 8 prototypes that reflected how they had used the feminist design tool in the design process. These are detailed in the project report,⁴⁴ but I will highlight a few here.

Pany was designed to tackle loneliness amongst elderly people. It has a range of voice options that can be configured by the user. To remind the user Pany is not human, it says: “If you want me to stop, just say ‘Pany stop’, don’t worry I won’t be offended because I am a bot”

Bud is a self-reflection voice assistant for teenagers. It was designed considering the persona of a 14-year old who has a tense relationship with her family and has turned to bullying as a way to gain control over her life. The pitch of bud’s voice can be adjusted with a slider function. Instead of ‘choosing a gender’, the user can simply choose the sound of a voice they feel most comfortable with.

HiFuture is designed for students that are confused and overwhelmed about career pathways. When it receives inappropriate commands, it responds assertively but with a sense of sarcastic humour:

User: You are f***ing useless.

HiFuture: Good luck with that language at your interview.

Through this creative project, we wanted to make visible the ways in which voice assistants reproduce gender inequalities and fail to respond to abuse. We wanted to bring a community of young people together to enter a space of feminist critique and making. It was important that we allowed the critique to be a springboard for thinking about other possible imaginaries where voice assistants are conceived differently.

There are clear limitations in this work. More is needed than re-thinking voice assistants at the level of conversation design and voice tone and pitch.⁴⁵ A deep feminist approach to voice technologies needs to overhaul the entire ecosystem, attending to its consequences for people and the planet. In their revelatory *Anatomy of an AI System*, Kate Crawford and Vladen Joler expose how “each small moment of convenience—be it answering a question, turning on a light, or playing a song—requires a vast planetary network, fuelled by the extraction of non-renewable materials, labour, and data”.⁴⁶ Although the authors do not frame this work in feminist terms, it is highly aligned with feminist approaches that wish to surface the impact of technologies on the environment,⁴⁷ the labour that produces them,⁴⁸ their extractive data practices,⁴⁹ their privacy implications and ability to facilitate domestic violence,⁵⁰ and their position in the ever increasing culture of ‘surveillance capitalism’.⁵¹ Efforts also need to be made to understand how these ecosystems intersect with sexism, racism, political and class discrimination. Sareeta Amrut advocates for “developing practices to train sociotechnical systems—algorithms and their human makers—to begin with the material and embodied situations in which these systems are entangled, which include from the start histories of race, gender and dehumanisation”.⁵² All these webs need frost to settle on them so that they can be seen and re-imagined by feminists and their allies across disciplinary and geographical borders.

Final Reflections

Ulrike Bergermann declared in 1998 that feminism has always been a cyborg that links rules to flesh, and questions the ‘so-called natural’. The Xenofeminist Manifesto declares: ‘If nature is unjust, change nature.’⁵³ What thrills me about feminisms in all their techno-fleshy manifestations, is that they question the normative and challenge the status quo. They seek to say what is unsaid and make visible what is deliberately (or unknowingly) obscured. They do not accept what comes to be seen as the inevitable progression of things. Then, they instantiate alternatives—bringing new socio-technical imaginaries into being. Sometimes this happens through activism, advocacy and organizing. Sometimes through aca-

demic rigor, critique or fiction. Sometimes, through artistic practices that bring a politico-aesthetic hybridity and a radical imagination to the field.

Feminism and whistleblowing are distinctive practices with their own genealogies, functions and outputs. However, their energies are aligned in aiming to unveil injustice and rectify it. While they may not occupy a direct lineage, they share a mindset that wants to expose systems of power, and make the invisible visible. In these words, I have tried to weave a narrative about feminism as a creative tool for exposing inequitable norms and creating fertile entry points for creative practice. I wanted to think about feminism as metaphorical frost that lands on techno-social webs, revealing their invisible architectures. But feminism, my guide *and* my nagging companion, has a way of disrupting things just when you think you have them resolved. As I came to the end of the writing process, I read a quote from Siana Bangura, founder of the Black British Feminist platform, No Fly on the WALL,⁵⁴ which she stated in a panel discussion at the Post-Cyber Feminist International: “You have to always be visible and productive or else you’re invisible”.

While I have tried to make an argument about feminism’s capacity to make invisible inequalities visible so that they can be addressed, techno-capitalist logics grind along demanding that the hyper-visibility of women is maintained to uphold the productivity and profitability of platforms.

So, there are no conclusions—only possible feminisms and possible internets that we can strive to create as a global community.

Notes

1. Bergermann, Ulrika. “Do X”, *First Cyberfeminist International*, 1997. https://monoskop.org/images/7/77/First_Cyberfeminist_International_1998.pdf.
2. Intersectional feminist approaches do not only look at gender injustice—they also consider the ways in which race, class, ability or any other aspect of a person’s identity can combine in ways that lead to unique modes of discrimination.
3. Haraway, Donna. “A manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s”, *Australian Feminist Studies* 2, no. 4, 1-42, (1987): <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1987.9961538>.
4. Ibid, 223.
5. To see caregiving as “in women’s nature” or to see women as “naturally” emotional rather than logical is to submit to constructed notions that take set in the cultural imaginary and reinforce gender oppression.
6. “Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century”, *VNS Matrix*, 1991, <https://vnsmatrix.net/projects/the-cyberfeminist-manifesto-for-the-21st-century>.
7. In a discussion of Cyberfeminism at the UK’s Barbican Centre in 2019, Judy Wajcman noted that dominant narratives in feminist discourse are set up by Western standards, and that in South America Donna Haraway is not as strong an academic reference as in the West. She argues that “Haraway’s texts, despite advocating for socialist feminism and having strong political agendas, often lack the clarity and simplicity to be accessed by anyone who does not belong to the hyper educated Western academia elite.” Di Leone, Chiara. “Revisiting the Future: Technofeminism in the 21st Century”, *Furtherfield*, 2019, <https://www.furtherfield.org/a-review-of-technofeminism-in-the-21st-century>.

8. Wilding, Faith. "Where is the Feminism in Cyberfeminism?", *N-Paradoxa* 2, (1998); Nakamura Lisa and Geert Lovink, "Talking Race and Cyberspace: An Interview with Lisa Nakamura", *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 26, no. 1, (2005): 60-65; ICA, *Black Feminism and Post-Cyber Feminism. A panel with Akwugo Emejulu, Bangura, Kiyémis Francesca Sobande*, 2017. For transnational perspectives on cyberfeminism see Radhika Gajjala, "Third World' perspectives on cyberfeminism", *Development in Practice* 9, no. 5, (2010): 616-619 and Payal Arora and Rumman and Chowdhury, (eds) "Special Collection: Cross-cultural Feminist Technologies", *Global Perspectives* (2021), <https://online.ucpress.edu/gp/collection/232/Special-Collection-Cross-cultural-Feminist>.
9. Wajcman, Judy. *TechnoFeminism* (Hoboken, NJ: Polity, 2013).
10. Wajcman, Judy. *TechnoFeminism*, 7; Sollfrank, Cornelia. *The Beautiful Warriors: Technofeminist Praxis in the Twenty-First Century* (Colchester / New York / Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2020).
11. <https://cyberfeminismindex.com>. The Rhizome website, which hosts the index, states that the term "Cyberfeminism" has "brought feminisms and technologies into conflict and conversation, while the term itself has been contested, reimagined, debunked, and expanded. Cyberfeminism Index does not attempt to resolve these contradictions, but to honor the multiplicity of practices that might be gathered under this imperfect umbrella".
12. The First Cyberfeminist International took place at Documenta X, a contemporary art exhibition in Kassel, Germany. It was organized by the first cyberfeminist organisation, the Old Boys Network (OBN), and included work by OBN members including Cornelia Sollfrank (Hamburg/Berlin), Susanne Ackers (Berlin), Julianne Pierce (Sydney), Helene von Oldenburg (Rastede/ Hamburg), Claudia Reiche (Hamburg), Faith Wilding (Pittsburgh), Yvonne Volkart (Zürich), Verena Kuni (Frankfurt) and others: The Old Boys Network, 1997. *The First Cyberfeminist International*. https://monoskop.org/images/7/77/First_Cyberfeminist_International_1998.pdf.
13. ICA 2017.
14. <https://feministinternet.org/en/principles>.
15. Feminism itself is imperfect and insufficient because it has a history of oppression and whiteness. The Women's Center for Creative Work, which cultivates L.A.'s feminist creative communities and practices, defines white feminism as "a Feminism that prioritizes the experiences and perspectives of cis, white, able bodied, middle class white women." See: <https://corevalues.womenscenterforcreativework.com>.
16. Costanza-Chock, Sasha. *Design justice: community-led practices to build the worlds we need* (Cambridge : The MIT Press, 2020).
17. <https://criticalracedigitalstudies.com>.
18. <https://queersts.com>.
19. Harding, Sarah (ed.). *The Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies Reader*, (Duke University Press, 2011).
20. Sapra, Sonalini, "Feminist Perspectives on the Environment", *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, (2017): <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.49>.
21. Agostinho, Daniela and Nanna Bonde Thylstrup, "'If truth was a woman': Leaky infrastructures and the gender politics of truth-telling". *Ephemera*, 19, no. 4, (2019): 746.
22. Ibid, 749.
23. These narratives are increasingly challenged, such as in Claire Evans' *Broad Band: The Untold Story of the Women Who Made the Internet*, (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2018).
24. Agostinho and Bonde Thylstrup, "'If Truth Was a Woman'", 752.
25. Criado-Perez, Caroline. *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 2019), 186.
26. Stanger, Allison. *Reasons for Hope – The Ethics and Politics of Whistleblowing In Europe and the United States*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hqDsXavuaE.
27. EQUALS and UNESCO, *I'd Blush if I Could: Closing Gender Divides in Digital Skills Through Education*, (2019), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367416.page=1>.
28. Feldman, Jacqueline. "The Bot Politic". *The New Yorker*, December 31, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/the-bot-politic>; Fessler, Leah. "We tested bots like Siri and Alexa to see who would stand up to sexual harassment", *Quartz*, 2017 <https://qz.com/911681/we-tested-apples-siri-amazon-echos-alexa-microsofts-cortana-and-googles-google-home-to-see-which-personal-assistant-bots-stand-up-for-themselves-in-the-face-of-sexual-harassment/>; Strengers, Yolande and Jenny Kennedy, *The Smart Wife: Why Siri, Alexa, and Other Smart Home Devices Need a Feminist Reboot* (MIT Press, 2021).

29. Critiques have also been made about accent bias: Harwell, Drew. "The Accent Gap", *The Washington Post*, July 19, 2018, [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 117, no. 14, \(April 2020\): 7684-7689 <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1915768117>.](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/business/alexa-does-not-understand-your-accent/and-racial-disparities-in-automated-speech-recognition—i.e. Koencke, Allison et.al,)
30. Feldman, "The Bot Politic".
31. There are some exceptions, such as when BMW had to recall a series of cars with female voiced satellite navigation systems in Germany, because the men there didn't like being told what to do in a car by a "woman".
32. Agostinho and Bonde Thylstrup, "If Truth Was a Woman", 747.
33. *Ibid.*, 752.
34. Fessler, Leah. "Amazon's Alexa is now a feminist, and she's sorry if that upsets you", *Quartz at Work*, January 17, 2018, <https://qz.com/work/1180607/amazons-alexa-is-now-a-feminist-and-shes-sorry-if-that-upsets-you>.
35. Myers West, Sarah, Meredith Whittaker & Kate Crawford, "Discriminating Systems: Gender, Race and Power in AI", AI Now Institute, <https://ainowinstitute.org/discriminatingystems.html>.
36. bit.ly/feministalexaoverview.
37. Young, Josie, *Feminist Chatbot Design Process*, 2017, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/oB036SIUSi-z4UkzYUUVGTGdocXc>.
38. Bardzell, Shaowen. "Feminist HCI: taking stock and outlining an agenda for design", *CHI '10: Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, (April 2010): 1301–1310 <https://doi.org/10.1145/1753326.1753521>. For Bardzell, contemporary feminism (which for her is anti-essentialist feminism that doesn't treat "femaleness" or "femininity" as a given fact) is a natural ally to design because it seeks to make visible the ways that gender is constructed in everyday life and then generate opportunities for intervention.
39. Feminist Internet and Josie Young, *Feminist Design Tool: Defensible Decision Making for Interaction Design and AI*, (2018): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AxWWPb76Lkz_71G1kqLqJW9a17xB5a5P.
40. When iterating the tool we changed "User" to "Stakeholder", which emphasises the idea that we all have a stake in the technologies we use and are active participants in constructing their social meaning and value.
41. Bardzell, "Feminist HCI: taking stock and outlining an agenda for design", 1306.
42. Amrute, Sareeta, "Of Techno-Ethics and Techno-Affects." *Feminist Review* 123, no. 1 (November 2019): 56–73, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0141778919879744>.
43. Lomas, Natasha, "Duplex shows Google failing at ethical and creative AI design", 2018, <https://techcrunch.com/2018/05/10/duplex-shows-google-failing-at-ethical-and-creative-ai-design>.
44. Feminist Internet, *Designing a Feminist Alexa: An experiment in feminist conversation design*, 2018, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v1rIT8dIA9muhvd-XfCCCCUQcujRhMOO>.
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46. See <https://anatomyof.ai>.
47. E Romberger, Julia, "Ecofeminist Ethics and Digital Technology: A Case Study of Microsoft Word", *Ecofeminism and Rhetoric: Critical Perspectives on Sex, Technology, and Discourse*, edited by Vakoch Douglas A., 117–44, (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qcnk8.9>; Strengers and Kennedy, "The Smart Wife".
48. Sinders, Caroline. "Rethinking Artificial Intelligence through Feminism" CCCBLAB, May 05, 2020, <http://lab.cccb.org/en/rethinking-artificial-intelligence-through-feminism>.
49. D'Ignazio, Catherine and Lauren F. Klein, *Data Feminism* (MIT Press).
50. Bowles, Nellie. "Thermostats, Locks and Lights: Digital Tools of Domestic Abuse". *The New York Times*, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/23/technology/smart-home-devices-domestic-abuse.html>.
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52. Amrute, "Of Techno-Ethics and Techno-Affects."
53. <https://laboriacuboniks.net/manifesto/xenofeminism-a-politics-for-alienation>.
54. <https://noflyonthewall.com>.



MAGNUS AG

Photo courtesy of the author

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MAGNUS AG

IN OUR DATA-DRIVEN WORLDS AUTHORITARIAN STATES KNOW: ART IS THE LIE THAT TELLS THE TRUTH

Did the Tiananmen Massacre happen?

NO ONE VISITING Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall in Taipei in June 2019, as I did, would have much doubt. An enormous inflatable “Tank Man” was prominently placed in front of the entrance. The installation was created by Taiwanese artist Shake, inspired by a sketch of dissident Chinese artist Badiucao. This giant inflatable “tank man” was of course a reference to the unidentified singular demonstrator confronting a line of People’s Liberation Army tanks that have come to symbolise the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests and Massacre where hundreds and maybe thousands of students and workers were killed by the Chinese government and military to quell a momentum-gaining pro-democracy movement in Beijing.¹ Badiucao first performed the piece “One TankMan” in Australia on June 4, 2016 and later encouraged people to set up their own performances by cosplaying the look of the tank man posing with bags in each hand while sharing photos under the hashtag #TankMen2018.²

I was in Taipei to talk about digital authoritarianism, including the Beijing government and Chinese technology companies’ unprecedented and sophisticated digital measures to exert narrative control. The domestic censorship operates through a system of intermediary liability where Chinese companies are held liable for content on their platforms operated from the Chinese mainland.³ Monitoring of blacklisted keywords and images, from a range of applications including microblogs, live streaming platforms, chat apps, and mobile games, show that the Tiananmen Massacre anniversary remains one of the most consistently censored topics.⁴ But non-Chinese companies are in no way off the hook. In June 2020, the video conference company Zoom—that has been no less integral to many people’s communications since COVID-19 hit—suspended accounts of activists based outside of China for hosting online Tiananmen commemorations following requests



The inflatable *Tank Man* installed in Taipei, Taiwan in June 2019 by Taiwanese artist Shake and inspired by a sketch of dissident Chinese artist Badiucao. Photo courtesy of the author.

from Chinese authorities. When the company was met with public criticism, Zoom apologized but notably only for affecting users outside of China, not for censoring users in China.⁵

As I stood there in Taiwan's capital on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre, it seemed surreal that both the inflatable "Tank Man"—that in many ways looked as harmless as a bouncy castle—and me sharing pictures of it, would be close to unthinkable across the 180 km wide Taiwan Strait that separates democratic Taiwan from mainland China.

But the Beijing government's ambition and ability to control our narratives was soon to hit even closer to home. On June 4, the day after experiencing the inflatable "Tank Man" in Taipei, I was back in Hong Kong where I lived at the time. In iconic Victoria Park, surrounded by some of Hong Kong's tallest skyscrapers, I was one of more than 100,000 Hongkongers that took part in what for 30 years has been one of the only vigils for the Tiananmen Massacre on Chinese soil.⁶ This is how I summed up the experience in a social media post along with a video of thousands of people holding candles while Cantonese music plays "I have rarely been part of anything as moving, as beautiful, and as real. #RememberJune4 #TiananmenMassacre #HongKong".⁷

What no one knew at the time was that this might have been the last large-scale vigil in Hong Kong for the foreseeable future. As we exited Victoria Park to walk home, the surrounding narrow streets were filled with activists and citizens with posters and flyers encouraging everyone to take part in an upcoming



More than 100,000 people gathered in Hong Kong's Victoria Park on June 4, 2019 to commemorate the Tiananmen Massacre. Photo courtesy of the author.

demonstration against the now infamous extradition bill introduced by the Hong Kong government earlier in the year. The following Sunday upwards of one million Hongkongers took to the street in what is often seen as the start of the 2019 pro-democracy protests. The subsequent Sunday closer to two million Hongkongers joined in protests.⁸

Two years later, as I write this in a Copenhagen apartment, both the 2020 and 2021 Tiananmen Massacre Vigils have effectively been banned, the city's Tiananmen Square museum—the only one of its kind in Greater China—forced closed, and Hongkongers who took part in informal vigils and gatherings have been charged and convicted under Hong Kong's new draconian National Security Law imposed by Beijing in swift reaction to the 2019 protests.⁹

In private and in the digital space Hongkongers might still be able to commemorate the massacre. However, the National Security Law has had a significant chilling effect as it makes anything Beijing officials regarded as inciting subversion, secession, terrorism, or colluding with foreign forces punishable by up to life in prison. Article 38 broadens the law beyond the physical territory of Hong Kong: "This Law shall apply to offenses under this Law committed against the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region from outside the Region by a person who is not a permanent resident of the Region". In other words, nobody, anywhere, is spared—including me for writing this text or you if you wanted to tweet a picture of the inflatable "Tank Man".

States New Ideology of Information Abundance

Before I moved to Hong Kong and started feeling the silencing nature of digital authoritarianism on my own body and in my own writing, I spent close to a decade in the US and Europe with human rights organizations focused on the right to freedom of expression. I have thus spent countless hours researching, documenting and advocating cases where journalists and artists are imprisoned or censored. And although the Chinese government often tops the lists of worst jailers and biggest censors, they are in no way alone. In 2020, Freemuse, where I worked from 2015-17 and have since contributed as a consultant, documented 978 acts of violations of artistic freedom in 89 countries and online spaces. 17 artists were killed, 82 were imprisoned and 133 detained, while the organization confirmed 352 acts of censorship in 73 countries. The perpetrators range from political and religious groups, to social media platforms and private individuals, but it is worth noting that different government authorities instigated the violations in 60 percent of the cases.¹⁰

What Freemuse is counting here is of course human rights violations as defined by international conventions, most notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. No easy task in and of itself, given the sensitivity, vulnerabilities and risk for everyone involved, from the victim and their family, to any sources that dare speak out. However, what is even harder to count—in particular for a human rights organization but also for everyone else—is when no individually identifiable action that meets the threshold of a human rights violation has taken place. As authoritarian states have realized that a filled prison cell or a closed art gallery is no longer the only, or necessary most efficient, way to uphold their dominant narrative in an era of data-driven communications, a tactical shift has taken place to what has been called an “ideology of information abundance”.¹¹

Authoritarian states’, ‘old’ ideology of information scarcity—e.g. imprisonment and censorship of truth tellers and other dissident voices has not disappeared though. Rather, it has been supplemented by a new range of tools and tactics such as cyber attacks, hacking, invasion of privacy, computational propaganda, disinformation, and political bots designed to intimidate alternative voices into silence or simply crowd out inconvenient truths, be they artistic or otherwise.¹²

And while most artists would know what government is imprisoning them, a key feature of States’ ideology of information abundance is that the digital attacks and disinformation is not necessarily coming from government-controlled entities directly. Rather, depending on the local context, a lot of it is a result of a complex web of formal and informal command lines, power structures and incentivising practises that creates online environments where artists challenging

a dominant narrative will feel like the attacks they face are created organically by a multitude of actors and individuals. This is no coincidence. As many prominent alternative voices in the digital space have attested to, the feeling of being attacked from “all sides” without a clear identifiable opponent is part of what makes the experience terrifying and resulting in some people either permanently or for a period of time deciding to silence themselves.¹³

‘Traditional Values’ and Thin-Skinned Presidents

Embracing misogynistic ‘traditional values’, as defined by orthodox conservative groups around the world, has proven to be a popular way for so-called ‘strongmen’ presidents and their authoritarian states to build and signal to troll armies who and what to target online. When I was invited to give a talk on artistic freedom at the Garage Museum in Moscow in 2017, I chose a lighthearted but no less censored Chinese Internet meme comparing China’s president Xi Jinping with Winnie the Pooh to illustrate a point about thin-skinned presidents as a defining feature of our time. I could of course have chosen the viral photo of the mural with Russian president Vladimir Putin kissing then US president Donald Trump by Dominykas Čečkauskas and Mindaugas Bonanu.¹⁴ But I saw no reason to create unnecessary trouble for an art institution already navigating the many complexities of the Russian art scene. In 2012, when Vladimir Putin was reinstated as the President of Russia, he vowed to “respect and protect the rights and freedoms of man and citizen”.¹⁵ But shortly after, his government introduced a range of laws and actions proving a more cynical and limited understanding of the rights and freedom of the country’s citizens. An amendment to the Russian criminal code, which was widely seen as a reaction to the anti-Putin performance in a Moscow cathedral by the feminist protest punk group Pussy Riot, made it a crime punishable with prison to offend the “religious feelings of believers”. Similarly, Putin’s anti-LGBT “propaganda” law and “foreign agents” law have sent a chilling message to artists and others who express alternatives to the government line.¹⁶

“The atmosphere [here] is very toxic. It is hard to survive if you are an artist”,¹⁷ Pussy Riot member and actor Nika Nikulshina told me from Moscow last year. Yet it is hard to find a picture on Nikulshina’s Instagram that does not in some creative way challenges Putin’s patriarchal story of what Russia is or should be.¹⁸ Nikulshina, whom I first met in connection with a censored Badiucao art exhibition in Hong Kong, caught the world’s attention when she, along with three fellow activists, ran onto the pitch during the 2018 FIFA World Cup final hosted in Moscow to protest human rights abuses in the country. For that she received a 15-day jail sentence and has since been detained and jailed multiple times, often in the lead-up to important dates on the official Russian calendar such as Victory Day



Mural with Russian president Vladimir Putin kissing then US president Donald Trump by Dominykas Čečkauskas and Mindaugas Bonanu. Photo courtesy of the artists.

and latest out of fear she would disrupt the Euro 2020 games (played in 2021) in St. Petersburg. As Nikulshina explained it to me last year: “The authorities try to protect themselves from contemporary art”.¹⁹

In 42% of cases “indecentcy” was the main rationale used to silence women and artworks according to Freemuse’s categorization of artistic freedom violations in 2020. Other rationales included “politics” (27) and “religion” (16%).²⁰

Despite an increased focus in recent years, the systematic study of online violence against women artists is still under-analysed. There are of course obvious differences, but we can get some indication of the threats women artists face when challenging both states and other power structures dominant narratives from the challenges women journalists face when doing the same.

In a 2021 report that is surprisingly candid for a UN agency, UNESCO authors note that online attacks on women journalists appear to be increasing significantly, and conclude that the online violence is designed to “belittle, humiliate, and shame; induce fear, silence, and retreat; discredit them professionally, undermining accountability journalism and trust in facts; and chill their active participation (along with that of their sources, colleagues and audiences) in public debate”.²¹

“For me there is a direct relationship between dance and liberation...when a woman stands on stage to dance what she is saying is: ‘Here I am, I am not ashamed of my body. I am confident and I don’t fear you,’”²² says dancer and women’s right activist Sheema Kermani when talking about her artistic and activist practice. I first met Kermani in Karachi, Pakistan, at a workshop I was co-hosting with Shirkat Gah as part of my work for Freemuse. Although she founded Tehrik-e-Niswan, a women’s rights movement, in Pakistan in the early 1970s, the Internet and in particular social media has become an important part of her activism in or-

der to spotlight specific injustices, highlight empowering performances and reach both domestic and international audiences.

“It is absolutely essential for us to feel that we are connected to those who can raise a voice for us internationally... Whenever the international media has given us some consideration it has helped us to promote our work nationally”,²³ Kermani told me on a video call from Karachi.

When a suicide bomber attacked a shrine in 2017, killing 90 people, Kermani came to the Sufi shrine in the days after and performed the Dhamaal, a spiritual dance in an act of defiance and solidarity. The videos²⁴ and images of her brave performance reverberated around the world creating a beautiful, graceful, and powerful counter-narrative to the fear and silence the terrorist act was supposed to create.

Leadership Looks Different

The emergence of politically inspired and shareable art as a defining character of social movements of the 21st century has been widely documented, and the Internet or social media is—probably overly optimistically—often hailed as a central and positive factor in this development.²⁵

One argument why creative expressions play a prominent role in contemporary social movements is that the leadership of such movements has changed. Many young people I spoke to in the streets of Hong Kong during the 2019 protest described what they were part of as a “leaderless movement”, and artistic expressions from artists as well as regular citizens became an instrumental part of expressing the values, ideas and tactics of the movement.²⁶ Those same ideas and tactics would historically have been expressed by one or a handful of identifiable leaders.

According to Jamila Raqib, executive director of the Albert Einstein Institution, a leading organization promoting the study and use of nonviolent action based in Boston, USA, so-called leaderless movements show a new recognition of what power is and where it comes from. “Leadership looks different than it did in the Indian independence movement, the American civil rights movement, the Polish Solidarity movement. It is not necessarily that there is no leadership. But it is not centralized and it is not charismatic in the sense that one person has all the knowledge and determines strategy. If we decentralize knowledge and access to information, I think that takes the place of a need for one person that tells us what to do”,²⁷ she told me from Boston when I interviewed her during the 2019 Hong Kong protests.

The Data-Driven Arms Race for Our Attention

Artists at the forefront of social movements have embraced new digital infrastructures to reach real and perceived global audiences.²⁸ The complexity of assessing the impact of artistic expressions in social movements and if and how it scales with the introduction of social media and other data-driven processes is no easy task. But two things are clear; one, whether you are a socially engaged artists in Taiwan, a young protester in the streets of Hong Kong, an icon for women's rights in Pakistan, a journalist uncovering the wrongdoings of the powerful, or a whistleblower as



Sheema Kermani on stage at the Arts Council in Karachi, Pakistan. Photo courtesy of Sheema Kermani.

described throughout this anthology, one thing everyone has in common is the need for attention from others and ideally at a scale to drive the intended progressive change. Secondly, authoritarian regimes and other reactionary power structures are acutely aware of this and, as described above, they are going to great lengths to either silence the critical voice or make sure no broader societal attention is awarded to that voice.

This arms race for attention between opposing forces in society is nothing new. However, the dynamics and infrastructures that determine what receives our attention have changed fundamentally. In the book *Feed-forward*,²⁹ artist and professor Mark Hansen argues that media has undergone a fundamental shift from past-directed-recording platforms to a data-driven anticipation of the future. With smart devices and microsensors, we now have the capacity to access aspects of our experience that would otherwise be beyond the grasp of our modes of perceptual awareness.³⁰

Newspapers told you what happened yesterday. Data-driven media, based on existing data-points associated with their profiles of us, tries to anticipate what is most likely to capture your attention next. We are therefore no longer able to consciously decide what art, information or propaganda we want to embrace. In no way a replicable data analysis, but sitting with my phone in Hong Kong during the protest it was remarkable how few videos from the pro-democracy protests I

was able to find on the Chinese video app TikTok, while American owned Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram were flooded with glorified images and videos of young pro-democracy protesters. Data-driven processes are at best helping you find the most relevant information to create change or at worst manipulating your access and exposure to the very information you are basing your decisions on. Or as Shoshana Zuboff describes it in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*: “A new economic order [has emerged] that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices of extradition, prediction and sales”.³¹ And you might add narrative control.

The premise becomes no less challenging for progressive artists and other truth tellers when taking into account who owns and dominates the vast majority of the data, knowledge and resources to run these predictions about our future attention and behaviour. Our current digital infrastructures are either ultimately controlled and regulated by digital authoritarian states—most notably Chinese owned Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, ByteDance (creator of TikTok that passed two billion app downloads globally last year³²) and Huawei, or governed by a handful of American owned tech giants like Facebook, Amazon, Alphabet, bordering on monopolies when it comes to the concentration of data, wealth and power, with business models relying on selling citizens attention and data to the highest bidder including actors working against free open democratic societies. The disturbingly close ties between US intelligence services and Alphabet—the parent company of Google and YouTube—as well as the scale of Facebook’s Cambridge Analytica scandal and the company’s outrageous negligence in regards to its role in the Rohingya genocide, crystallizes the scary challenges of our data-driven predicaments.³³

The companies’ and ultimately their governments’ ability, both Chinese and American, to predict and influence our future behaviour is dependent on them gathering more data on us. That ability is currently improving at unimaginable rates. Looking at it from this perspective, the artistic practices described above that so heavily involve giant tech companies’ platforms, apps and search engines have thus—despite undoubtedly creating change at local levels—also contributed to strengthening some of the very power structures they are trying to challenge.

This is a new condition for artists and other truth tellers that needs to be taken into account all the way from the individual art performance, to how we organize, communicate and demand change as a creative civil society.

But if there is one thing I have learned from my many encounters with courageous awe-inspiring artists like Badiucao, who is no longer in China, Nika Nikulshina in Russia and Sheema Kermani in Pakistan, on the frontlines of some of our defining struggles of our times, it is that artists will never rest. I have also witnessed how well-organized human rights campaigns have led authoritarian governments to change behaviour—simply because the cost of keeping an artist

silenced in jail has increased, as a result of coordinated civil society pressure, to a level that outweighed the benefits of holding her behind bars. So although human rights organizations—many of them founded in the late 70s, early 80s—have been slow to adapt to the fundamental conditions of our data-driven worlds, the core mandate and mission of putting pressure on and holding power structures to account is as important and relevant as ever. I have met artists who have been jailed multiple times and have had their life work and finances dismantled only to start again as soon as the prison doors opened. As F. Scott Fitzgerald has said “the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise”.³⁴ We need this relentless approach from artists and it must be encouraged and empowered by human rights and other support structures so artists can help us reimagine and build alternative digital infrastructures that replace the current market-oriented or authoritarian default approaches to data governance with a common-oriented approach that puts rights, interests and sovereignty of all people in all parts of the world at its centre.

It is no small task and will demand a lot of truth-telling from a multitude of critical approaches about surveillance capitalist companies as well as digital authoritarian states. But thanks to Pablo Picasso, we know where to start, since:

Art is the lie that tells the truth.³⁵

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OS KEYES

Photo by Dorothy Edwards

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OS KEYES

JUSTICE, CHANGE AND TECHNOLOGY ON THE LIMITS OF WHISTLEBLOWING¹

THIS CHAPTER is about social change, and the means we go about achieving it. Social change is fundamentally just that: *social*. It is about different ways of relating to each other, and the different kinds of people we might be as a result. Vitality, the work of making this change happen—of working towards a world in which people relate and reflect in different ways—is just as social. It consists of ways of changing or enabling those relations, ways of reflecting on ourselves and each other, and ways of forming and reforming collective movements and identities. Social change is social, and so is the work of producing it.

Confusingly, some of the archetypes and personas we celebrate as representing activism at its purest are fundamentally asocial. One of those is the “truth-teller”: the whistleblower, the critic, the iconoclast. In this chapter I argue that the way we frame truth-telling, and the figure who does it ignores the social nature of change, and risks celebrating and mimicking ideals that not only do a poor job of getting us closer to a better world, but in many respects *undermine* efforts for social change through the voices and attitudes they do (or do not) make space for.

Ideas and Ideals of Social Change

The techniques to be used in activism or social movements—what approach makes the most sense given a particular problem or situation—are endlessly contested. To adapt a Yiddishism: if you have three activists, you have nine opinions. But one particular cluster of archetypes and people stands out. I’m thinking specifically of the “whistleblower”; the critical thinker and practitioner of critique; the iconoclast (literally: smasher of false idols).² Each of these archetypes is distinct, but what brings them *together* is the idea of a person who tells “dangerous truths”,³ and through doing so, catalyses and generates change in how we see the world—individually, and collectively—and how we behave towards it.

Each of these archetypes are individually valorised—particularly in progressive and leftist spaces. Whistleblowers are described as the “saints of the secular age”; as “extraordinary heroes” of “exceptional courage”.⁴ Snowden, Ellsberg, Manning—we give them awards, we praise their bravery and impact, we hold them up as a very particular idea of what people should be. And at the risk of assuming my audience: the perceived “purity” of critique, the value of the scholar Rita Felski vividly describes as “suspicious, knowing, self-conscious, hardheaded, tirelessly vigilant”,⁵ goes almost without saying. For individual activists, this is never one-sided—Snowden or Manning are portrayed as traitors as frequently as they are heroes, if not moreso. But critics portray them as traitors *rather than* whistleblowers; the link between whistleblowing and heroism remains intact.

I don’t want to come off as entirely unsympathetic; truth-telling *does* create avenues for change, and there are very good reasons (particularly on the left) to be suspicious, and to value suspicion.⁶ More broadly, in a society that centres the pursuits of truth and authenticity (Foucault, Taylor), truth is the currency of the day.⁷ If you want to create change, reformist or radical, revealing hidden truths is a familiar way of doing it. The problem is not truth-telling, but the status we give to it and the very odd way we see those who do it—specifically, our failure to attend to the *social relations* of the very methods we’re using to seek changes to social relations. I’m thinking of three things, in particular; the vulnerability of truth-telling to existing social inequalities, the way lauding and atomizing “truth-telling” creates unjust and perverse incentives for the forms of activism we value and engage in, and the actual impact that this mentality of suspicion, of unmasking, of taking nobody’s word for it, has on the ability of us—activists—to build community. I will unpack each of these in turn.

Whose Truths?

In 2018, Alex Stamos—the Chief Security Officer of Facebook—publicly began disassociating himself from the company, and making plans to leave. The central reason for his departure was misinformation: specifically, the feeling that Facebook had done a poor job in controlling it during the 2016 US presidential election, and the increasing certainty that the changes he felt were necessary would not be tolerated by the company.

Three years later, Doctor Timnit Gebru—a senior researcher at Google—went just as public with concerns, writing a paper that took issue with the societal and ecological consequences of large-scale machine learning systems (including those built by her employer). The two’s stories diverge entirely at that point. Alex Stamos, a White man with an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering, is now the director of the Stanford Internet Observatory and a visiting professor at Stanford

University. Doctor Gebru, an Ethiopian woman with a PhD from Stanford, is unemployed. The response to her work was to fire her.⁸

These are not unusual injustices: White man is lauded, Black woman is fired. Stamos's complaints were within what the game allowed; Gebru's were her getting above her station, and forgetting her place—a place characterized not only by the gendered and racialized inequalities that are endemic to US society in general, but the specific, additional inequalities and presumptions of ignorance and incompetence that come from the social character of the technology sector. Indeed, as someone who followed along both controversies, I cannot help but notice the ways in which Dr. Gebru's technical skills and brilliance are undercut and belittled precisely in order to delegitimize her experiences of racism and misogyny—and the way that the debate over those experiences has come to overshadow the concerns she first intended to go public about. In technological critique, it seems, Black women can (maybe) speak as Black women. But they better not dare to speak as scientists.

I highlight these disappointing yet unsurprising disparities here to emphasise that one way in which truth-telling is social is that it occurs *in society*: that it is undertaken under the conditions of society as it stands. These conditions include widespread epistemic injustice: inequalities in whose knowledge counts as knowledge, or as truth; inequalities in who is listened to, or permitted to speak without punishment.⁹ This goes double for *technological* critique: not only is there the general air of illegitimacy about the knowledge of women, queer people, disabled people and people of colour, there is the particular prominence and history of excluding such people from technology in particular.¹⁰

If truth-telling is merely one of a sheaf of approaches, and the truth-teller one of many actors, then this is not a *major* limitation: all tactics are flawed and partial. But my worry is that in our rhetoric and imaginaries, truth-telling becomes centred as the primary, or only, way of effecting change. If this is the case, then we are going to end up with imbalanced and *unjust* ideas of social change itself: we will end up prioritising those concerns that are taken up by those who are already listened to, and diminishing the rest. This is inarguably the precise opposite of what injustice-focused activism should be doing.

Collective Truths

Beyond the question of who gets to tell truths, there is also the question of what work goes into doing so—and how our centring of not just truth telling but the truth-teller, singular, obscures much of the labour that social movements depend on to thrive. As an illustration of precisely this, we can look at media portrayals of WikiLeaks, and the figures involved in operating it.

Following the disclosures of Edward Snowden—specifically, the information on NSA surveillance practices—WikiLeaks became practically a household name. Public and media attention rapidly focused on those working at the organisation, one of whom was Sarah Harrison. Originally a journalist, and a researcher for the Centre for Investigative Journalism, Harrison quickly became a vital part of WikiLeaks, playing a central role in the decision to publish the US diplomatic cables and in organising Edward Snowden's escape to Hong Kong, as Angela Richter recounts in her introduction to *Women, Whistleblowing, WikiLeaks*:

[Harrison] had travelled to Hong Kong for the organization and had helped Edward Snowden escape after his announcement that he was the NSA whistleblower. She intervened as his situation was becoming increasingly difficult. By the time she arrived in Hong Kong, Snowden was on his own...She stayed with him after the successful escape to Moscow, first for weeks in a windowless room in the transit zone of Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport, and then for many more months in the city. She did not leave for her voluntary exile in Berlin until she knew that Snowden was safe.¹¹

This “voluntary exile” continues to this day: as a consequence of her work for WikiLeaks, Harrison has been unable to return home since 2014. The centrality of Harrison's work according to those who were actually *involved* in WikiLeaks and its disclosures contrasts strongly with how media coverage discussed her. Harrison, *Der Spiegel* wrote, was simply the “assistant” or “friend” of Julian Assange—and this was the coverage by WikiLeaks media *partners*, nevermind venues more hostile to the disclosures.

What is the point of me telling this story? Is this not just misogyny, already discussed in the last section? No doubt, misogyny plays a massive part of the diminishing of Harrison's role, as highlighted by both Richter and Agostinho & Thylstrup.¹² But I would argue that there is something beyond, or perhaps intertwined with, misogyny, here. Specifically, there is a certain *atomisation* and *individualisation* of WikiLeaks, with a particular focus on (in this case) Snowden and Assange.

Stories of truth-telling heroes, like stories of heroes more broadly, are stories of unusual individuals. Truth-telling comes from the *one* person in a situation be brave enough (or insightful enough, or lucky enough, or mad enough) to say the unspeakable. Truth-telling is an individual practice, and if truth-telling is the idealised mechanism of social change, then social change, too, is an individual practice. Such a perspective makes a lot of sense; not only does it fit the broader individualist narratives of neoliberal society in general, there is a grain of truth to it. Social movements and social change often do begin with individual awakenings, and individual efforts.¹³ But the key word, there, is *begin*: even truth-telling often involves multiple parties, and turning those truths into action always

does. The *Collateral Murder* video would not be what it was without the editing of Birgitta Jónsdóttir; the escape of Snowden may have failed without the presence of Harrison. But our framings of truth-tellers are so individualised, and so focused on singular heroes, that we ignore these wider networks and the more mundane work required to keep them running.

Writing about the failure conditions of mutual aid networks, Dean Spade warns that one prominent vulnerability is the way in which “we are used to being part of groups that ignore ordinary caring labour, much of which is seen as women’s work...while celebrating only the final, outward-looking evidence of production: the big protest march, the finalized legislation, the release of someone from prison, the media coverage...many of us think ‘process is boring’. Everyone wants a selfie with Angela Davis at the big event, but many people are less interested in the months of meetings where we coordinate how to pull off that event”.¹⁴ The result of this perceived “boringness” is that the work of coordination, of editing, of administration, is devalued, and so are those who do it. Yet this work is also *vital* if groups are to be sustainable, and sustained—if they are to have a shot at making real change, and doing so without being deeply miserable for those participating.

To link this back to our example here: what is telling about the treatment of Harrison is not simply the misogyny that led to her being dismissed as an “assistant” or a “friend”, but that classification as an assistant or friend is the same as dismissing the importance of their work. The individualised nature of “the truth-teller” implicitly carries with it a certain *solitary* component; an intentional ignorance of (or, assumed absence of) the communities and networks needed to make truths matter, and the less “heroic”, but no less vital, work undertaken by those networks. By individualising change, and associating it only with heroic, public work, we risk kicking the chair out from under ourselves. Change needs communities, collectives, and networks, and organising them rarely involves work that is heroic. But it is work that matters, nonetheless.

After Truth

Finally, there is the issue of how these imageries not only misrepresent the relational nature of change, but sometimes actively *damage our ability to form those relationships*.

This section is personal for me, and is the reason I was first drawn to writing about this topic. Over the last four years, I fell—in some ways accidentally—into the role of the “teller of dangerous truths”. I was the critic, the exposé, the whistleblower, the walking, talking stereotype. My work—originally focused on facial recognition and its harms and inequalities¹⁵—centred on exposing falsehood, in unmasking shallow thinking. By most accounts, it was fairly successful, with

publications, press coverage, and growing public awareness. As I write, in fact, a collective of activist groups and individuals are preparing draft legislation to ban the technology I wrote about in the European Union. Presumably I should be rather happy with this; I pointed out that the emperor had no clothes and people are moving pretty fast to get him some underwear.

But the fact of the matter is that I am *not* happy, not now, and certainly not while I was doing the work. What I mostly remember is being miserable, and being exhausted, and being the source of profound hurt for a lot of other people. What I mostly feel is regret—regret for how I behaved, for how I went about my work, for how some of the same phenomena I highlight above (inequalities in who gets to speak, and an ignorance of the work needed to make change *sustainable*) absolutely snookered me. Many people from that time simply no longer talk to me, and while I hold out hope that the few who promised they would return will keep that promise, I consider it entirely understandable if they do not.

The reason for this all is psychic, affective; it is about the *mindset* of truth-telling, the persona and personality of that figure we valorise so much. Critical analysis is (as discussed above) a particular species of truth-telling, and the critic a type of truth-teller. Watkins describes the critic as one whose role is of “heroic resistance to all the social pressures toward conformity, mass culture homogeneity, utilitarian demands and the bureaucratization of knowledge”¹⁶ Felski, as mentioned earlier, articulates the mindset of the critic as “suspicious, knowing, self-conscious, hardheaded, tirelessly vigilant”,¹⁷ deploying these attitudes to unmask falsehood and shout truth.

Truth-tellers, as these descriptions make clear, certainly make bad enemies. But they make far more atrocious friends. I was this stereotype, and believed I had to be; I was suspicious, knowing, vigilant, hardheaded (definitely hardheaded). And if truth-telling truly was an individual, heroic practice, maybe this would have been okay. But it is not: it is, as we have discussed, *social*, involving whole networks of people collaborating to shape and endorse and publicise a truth, and even more vitally, ensure that something is *done* with it. And suspicion is a terrible basis on which to build a friendship. It is also, given the implicit and paradoxical dogmatism that comes with it, arguably a terrible basis to build truth.¹⁸

When truth-telling becomes a mindset and a personality—and when exposing truths becomes the highest value you adhere to—relationships become damaged, and impossible. Damaged, because when the only tools you have are destructive, building things—spaces, hopes, relationships—becomes incredibly hard, and incredibly alien. Impossible, because nobody can truly be that person all the time; we are all riven with contradictions, insecurities, little white lies that slowly blossom and less-white lies that metastasise like a cancer. Hanging your hat entirely on the truth means disappointing and hurting those around you when you fail to live up to that impossible standard—and it means lacking any useful tools for

repairing relationships when this inevitably happens. Suspicion does not allow space for vulnerability; vigilance does not allow space for trust.

Perhaps if we treated truth-telling as an activity for anyone, rather than truth-tellers as standalone “heroic” figures, things might be different. We would hold ourselves to more generous standards, we would have greater humility, less paranoia, and less fear; we would build precisely the kinds of relationships within our activism we are hoping for our activism to make possible for *everyone*. Perhaps not. But if we believe that there is a moral duty to aid efforts for social change—to build a better world, of better people, relating in better ways—then we have a duty to undertake this work *prefiguratively*: to embody the very values we wish to see.¹⁹ To trust, though trust is a risk;²⁰ to offer solidarity, though we might be disappointed. To understand that no one person can lead us to a better world, and that—as Debs put it—if they could lead us in, it would mean someone else could just as easily lead us out. To work collectively, not individually.

As I have learned the hard way, the valorisation of the truth-teller—the truth teller as an individual, as a *heroic* individual, as a *cynical* individual—trips us up in doing just these things. If truth-telling is what matters, then the questions of whose truths are listened to does not fit the frame. If truth-telling is *individual*, the work that scaffolds social change and makes it sustainable is wasted. And if truth-telling is a *mindset*, rather than a *technique*, then we can only be that cynical, paranoid, vigilant person. And frankly, a world of insecure cynicism that dismisses the value of “boring” work and glosses over the silencing of marginalized voices is an odd goal to have. We don’t need to go there; we already live there.

What we need is not more iconoclasts, or judgment; what we need is more understanding, more recognition. What we need is more appreciation of the bonds between us, the work that goes into sustaining them, and the need to *prioritise* sustaining them if we are to mirror the values we want to see in the world as a whole. We need well-rounded people, and well-rounded ideals of people, to have well-rounded spaces. As “well-rounded” hopefully makes clear, I am not suggesting that negativity or suspicion are bad, or have no place in our formation and undertaking of collective organizing. Both can be productive, and necessary; there is often much to be angry about. There is often an “aptness of anger”,²¹ a justified basis of suspicion and unmasking. As Eve Sedgwick notes, the tendency towards “paranoid readings” in segments of activism and academia is often entirely understandable: many of us start from positions in which there is much to be furious about.²²

What I am suggesting is, perhaps, simply that if we care so much about toppling false idols we should start with those in our midst. The idea of an atomized, suspicious, destructive hero as the sufficient conditions for change is one such idol. If we want a better world, one built by all of us, one for all of us, we cannot fall back on imaginaries about a single person tearing down the old. Such imagi-

naries preserve as much of the here-and-now as they claim to destroy. We have to learn how to build better ways of relating, and better ideas of what it means to be a good activist—and we have to do so together. Enough people want to be Edward Snowden; we need more people who want to be Sarah Harrison. Whole networks, collectives, communities of Harrisons.

Notes

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2. Related, more niche archetypes include Lorraine Code's evocative idea of the "epistemic gadfly". See Code, Lorraine. *Epistemic Responsibility*. (SUNY Press, 2020).
3. This framing is a riff on and echo of Foucault's concept of "parrhesia" and the "parrhesiac"; see Foucault, Michel. "Discourse and Truth" and "Parresia", (University of Chicago Press 2019). Without getting too into the weeds, however, the two cluster concepts are very different in their relation to social and communal dynamics, rather than simplistic ideas of the speaker and listener existing in a vacuum together—although they do both suffer from obvious gendered flaws. See Maxwell, Lida. "The politics and gender of truth-telling in Foucault's lectures on parrhesia." in *Contemporary Political Theory* 18.1 (2019), 22-42.
4. See Kenny, Kate, Marianna Fotaki, and Wim Vandekerckhove. "Whistleblower subjectivities: Organization and passionate attachment". in *Organization Studies* 41, no. 3, (2020), 323-343; Grant, Colin. "Whistle blowers: Saints of Secular Culture." *Journal of Business Ethics* 39.4, (2002), 391-399; Mansbach, Abraham. "Whistleblowing as Fearless Speech: The Radical Democratic Effects of Late Modern Parrhesia." *Whistleblowing and Democratic Values*, (2011), 12-26; Brown, A. J. "Whistleblowers as Heroes." *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*, (2017).
5. Felski, Rita. *The Limits of Critique*. (University of Chicago Press, 7, 2015).
6. Consider the long history of state government oppression of left-wing movements, in particular. COINTELPRO, the post-WTO crackdowns, and the current hyperfocus of policing resources on movements responding to White supremacy make for good reasons not to trust new people or information. My local and much-beloved anarchist bookstore, Left Bank Books, features a sign to the tune of: talk here as if the FBI is bugging it, because they probably are.
7. See Taylor, Charles. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. (Harvard University Press, 1992) and Williams, Bernard Arthur Owen. *Truth & Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*. (Princeton University Press, 2002).
8. Lyons, Kim, "Timnit Gebru's actual paper may explain why Google ejected her", *The Verge*, 2021, <https://www.theverge.com/2020/12/5/22155985/paper-timnit-gebru-fired-google-large-language-models-search-ai>.
9. See Code, Lorraine. *What Can She Know?: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Cornell University Press, 1991); Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. (Routledge, 2002); Prescod-Weinstein, Chanda. "Making Black women scientists under white empiricism: the racialization of epistemology in physics." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*

- 45.2 (2020): 421-447 and Dotson, Kristie. "How is this Paper Philosophy?" *Comparative Philosophy* 3 no.1., (2013): 121-122.
10. See Hicks, Mar. *Programmed inequality: Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing*. (MIT Press, 2017); Keyes, Os. "Automating autism: Disability, discourse, and Artificial Intelligence." *The Journal of Sociotechnical Critique* 1 no.1, (2020); Dunbar-Hester, Christina. *Hacking diversity: The Politics of Inclusion in Open Technology Cultures*. Vol. 21, (Princeton University Press, 2019).
 11. Avila, Renata, Sarah Harrison, and Angela Richter. *Women, Whistleblowing, WikiLeaks: A Conversation*. (OR Books, 2018), 1-2.
 12. Agostinho, Daniela, and Nanna Bonde Thylstrup. "'If Truth Was a Woman: Leaky Infrastructures and the Gender Politics of Truth-telling.'" *Ephemera* 19, no.4, (2019): 745-775.
 13. See, for example, the interviews with organizational founders in Nownes, Anthony J. *Organizing for Transgender Rights: Collective Action, Group Development, and the Rise of a New Social Movement*. (SUNY Press, 2019).
 14. Spade, Dean. *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity during this Crisis (and the Next)*, (Verso Books, 2020), 65-6.
 15. Keyes, Os. "The Misgendering Machines: Trans/HCI Implications of Automatic Gender Recognition". *Proceedings of the ACM on human-computer interaction* 2, no. CSCW (2018): 1-22.
 16. Watkins, Evan. "The Self-Evaluations of Critical Theory." *Boundary 2*, (1984): 359-378, quoted in Anker, Elizabeth S., and Rita Felski, eds. *Critique and Postcritique*, 7, (Duke University Press, 2017).
 17. Felski, Rita. "The Limits of Critique", 7, (University of Chicago Press, 2015).
 18. See Code, "Epistemic Responsibility", Chapter 1.
 19. Drouhard, Margaret, Josephine Hoy and Os Keyes, "Human-Computer Insurrection: Notes on an Anarchist HCI", *Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, (2019).
 20. Baier, Annette. "Trust and its vulnerabilities." *Moral Prejudices*, (1994): 130-151.
 21. Srinivasan, Amia. "The Aptness of Anger" *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26. no. 2, (2018): 123-144.
 22. Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You." (1997).

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